

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to recommend policy changes that would enhance Vietnamese community colleges related to lifelong learning, governance, and program relevance.

The project was not a typical education research paper. The study utilized a policy-oriented research methodology. Its purpose was not to yield “findings” in the traditional research sense. Instead, the purpose of policy-oriented research was to first identify and assess policy problems and then convincingly advocate to decision makers a specific future course of action or inaction. Therefore, the results of this study were not “findings” but rather substantiated recommendations that would enhance community colleges. First, the study examined exemplary international models in the research literature related to the three policy subtopics. Second, the political, economic and social context pertinent to the current policy environment in Vietnam was discussed. Third, the relevant current and draft new legislation was discussed as well as a case study documenting the innovative practices at the Tra Vinh Community College and their potential impact upon policy. Fourth, the study’s future oriented recommendations were detailed and underlying rationale explained.

The study made four recommendations. First, to promote lifelong learning, policy should develop community colleges’ unique position in order to facilitate academic credit transfer (i.e., articulation) between the post secondary vocational and college programming levels. Second, external stakeholders should form at least half the

representation on the mandatory institutional advisory boards that provide non-binding advice to provincial People's Committees. Third, community colleges should annually collect and report key performance indicator data (i.e., graduate employment and self employment rates, etc.) to the government. Fourth, Vietnamese researchers should explore further community college case studies and the results should inform new revisions of legislation regulating community colleges in Vietnam. In particular, further case study research should examine other education and training institutions to determine the impact of different innovative models designed to achieve the new legislation's objectives.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCC	Association of Canadian Community Colleges
CDN\$	Canadian dollars
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CTU	Can Tho University
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
ICP	Indochinese Communist Party
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
PAC	Program Advisory Committee
SLAST	Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology
SMES	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Sector
SOE	State Owned Enterprises
SRV	Socialist Republic of Vietnam
TVCC	Tra Vinh Community College
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
US	United States
VCCCP	Viet Nam Canada Community College Project

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In December 1986, the Sixth National Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party heralded a fundamental new direction for the country with the adoption of the “economic renovation” or “doi moi” policy (Turley, 1993, p. 2). It was believed that drastic reform of the state-controlled economy was necessary to avoid complete fiscal collapse. The new doi moi policy promoted a “market economy with a socialist direction” (Turley, p. 2). Private property and enterprises were legalized and, for the first time, extensive economic ties were forged with Western countries.

Today, by virtually any measure, the doi moi policy can be considered a tremendous success. The World Bank (1997) notes annual economic growth nearing ten percent. Per capita income has doubled and the national poverty rate has been halved over the past ten years. The influx of foreign capital continues and small and medium sized private businesses have supplanted state-owned enterprises as the focal point of economic growth. However, despite the remarkable economic evolution, the doi moi policy’s impact on the education and training sector, particularly at the tertiary (or post-secondary) level, has been negligible. Post-secondary institutions remain focused on producing graduates with skills suited to state-owned enterprises. While the vast majority of employment and self-employment opportunities are within the private sector, universities and colleges remain largely unable or unwilling to accommodate this new reality. Furthermore, according to the World Bank (1997), a large post-war baby boom

means that in Vietnam over one million new young people annually enter the labour market. Far too many of these young graduates are unable to find suitable employment because their knowledge and skills, developed in Vietnamese universities and colleges, do not match labour market demand.

The dichotomy between the private sector labour market demand and skills training supply from public sector institutions is a concern for the Government of Vietnam. The bureaucracy in the education and training sector remains largely unable or unwilling to adapt to the changing labour market environment. This is a result of two related factors. Firstly, the bureaucracy is composed of many Communist Party cadres with an entrenched and longstanding ideological antipathy towards the private sector. Secondly, while the doi moi policy promotes private sector development, it unconditionally affirms the ongoing political monopoly of the Communist Party. This presents a currently unresolved paradox for policy makers, bureaucrats and educators alike. How can education and training institutions focus on the needs of non-party stakeholders (such as the private sector) and remain exclusively accountable to the Communist Party?

The Government of Vietnam recognizes that the slow pace of reform in the education and training sector is beginning to seriously threaten the success to date of the doi moi policy. The *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) is currently before the Vietnam legislature. Part of the revised law is related to the reformation of tertiary (i.e., post-secondary) education and training institutions in order to better address new labour market demands. Through the legislation, the Government of Vietnam

recognizes the long-term consequences of the misalignment of public sector education and training institutions with current economic realities. Economic growth will be threatened as competition among employers for appropriately-trained human resources increases substantially. In addition, the potential for social unrest will be escalated as greater numbers of post-war baby boom graduates of public universities and colleges are unable to secure employment because their skills do not match employer needs. This lack of access to affordable skills training that is relevant to the labour market will intensify growing economic disparities, especially between generally poorer rural and typically more affluent urban communities. Therefore, without significant and immediate reform in the education and training sector the long-term success of the doi moi process will remain vulnerable.

Community colleges are a relatively new type of institution in the tertiary education and training system in Vietnam, with the first of the nine community colleges established only in 1996. The community colleges are unique in two fundamental ways. First, these institutions have a mandate to serve community employment and self-employment training needs across certification levels (i.e., vocational, college, and university) and economic sectors (e.g., construction, transportation, trade, etc.). Second, all nine community colleges were established in bilateral partnerships with the governments of the Netherlands, Canada, the United States, and France. The distinctive mandate of and international support for the community colleges provides a remarkable opportunity for the Government of Vietnam to experiment with new processes and provoke reform of the hitherto intransigent tertiary system. Given their unique

circumstances, community colleges could become the primary means in realigning the Vietnamese tertiary education and training system in accordance with the needs of the emerging private sector. Thus, the success or failure of community colleges in Vietnam will be a significant indication of the long-term sustainability of the entire doi moi reform process.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the study was to recommend policy changes that would enhance Vietnamese community colleges related to lifelong learning, governance, and program relevance. The study assessed recent and significant changes in the policy environment for the nine community colleges in Vietnam. The policy framework consisted principally of the *Decision of the minister of education and training for the promulgation of the provisional regulation of community colleges* (Ministry of Education and Training, 2002), the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998), and the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004). In particular, the strengths and weaknesses of the current and proposed legislation related to the market reforms were examined. In conclusion, this study answered the following research question: *What policy recommendations would enhance Vietnamese community colleges related to lifelong learning, governance, and program relevance?* Particular focus was accordingly placed upon the following policy aspects relating to community colleges:

- a) *How can community colleges better accommodate the concept of lifelong learning?*

- b) *How can community stakeholders take a more direct role in the governance of community colleges?*
- c) *How should community colleges enhance and sustain their relevance to the constantly changing needs of the labour market?*

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide recommendations that contribute to the debate amongst policy makers, administrators, and educators in Vietnam's education and training system about effective legislative and policy models for community colleges. In particular, the study may assist administrators and educators at the national, provincial, and school levels to promote community colleges as institutions that are more reflective and responsive to the local communities. The capacity to design and implement this reform of tertiary education and training in Vietnam is central to the sustained success of doi moi (or "economic renovation") process.

Assumptions

The following assumption was made:

1. The primary documents in the Vietnamese language provided to the researcher were accurately translated.

Delimitations

The following delimitations were made:

1. The study's results will indicate a recommended course of action (or inaction) to decision makers, not "findings" in the traditional research sense.

2. The study and policy recommendations were delimited to the topics of lifelong learning, governance and program relevance.
3. The case study was based upon observations from September 2001 to March 2005 at the Tra Vinh Community College.

Limitations

The following limitations were noted:

1. Not all legislative documents are public information in Vietnam and thus not incorporated in this study. However, current trends in the reform process can be determined through examining the current *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) and the *11th draft of the education law* (National Assembly, 2004) due to be passed in 2005.
2. The *Decision of the minister of education and training: Promulgation of the provisional regulation of community college* (Ministry of Education and Training, 2002) is available to the public but other documents that are unavailable or unknown to the researcher relating to the topic may exist.
3. The researcher is not Vietnamese and therefore has a cultural perspective different from typical educators, bureaucrats, and policy makers in Vietnam. International perspectives can play a constructive role in any policy development or innovation process but the researcher's foreign point of view influencing the study's recommendations should be recognized.

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions were commonly used:

Articulation – is a transfer of academic credit from a given education and training program towards the entry and advanced standing in another education and training program at a different certification level (e.g., university entry and credit provided to vocational or college level graduates)

Khmer – are a minority ethnic (i.e., Cambodian) group prevalent in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam.

Kinh – are the majority ethnic group in Vietnam.

Lifelong Learning – is the continuing of formally recognized learning throughout an individual's lifetime.

Provincial People's Committee – is a provincial government in Vietnam.

Public Policy – is a course of action or inaction chosen by governments to address a given problem or related set of problems.

Public Policy Determinants – are the peripheral influences such as the politics, economics, ideology, and culture that impact upon the public policy development process

Stakeholder – is an individual or group who has a legitimate expectation upon an organization or institution.

Tertiary Education and Training – is formal education and training beyond secondary education (i.e., post-secondary).

Terminal Point – is an instance in the tertiary education and training system where articulation to a higher certification level is not possible.

The Researcher

The researcher is currently the director of international services at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST). The researcher also currently acts as the project manager of the Vietnam Canada Community College Project (VCCCCP) funded in part by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Working internationally in the education and skills training since 1993, the researcher has collaborated with sector stakeholders in Vietnam since 1997. In addition to Vietnam, the researcher has assisted in the transition to market focused skills training systems in China, Hungary, Kyrgyz Republic, Slovak Republic and Ukraine.

Organization of the Project

Chapter One describes the purpose for this project, background information, the questions which the study will attempt to answer as well as the significance of the study. Chapter Two reviews the literature related to exemplary policy models related to the sub-questions: (a) lifelong learning and learner accessibility, (b) community governance models, (c) program relevance to labour markets. Chapter Three discusses the method used to analyze policy and formulate recommendations. Chapter Four describes the historical context in Vietnam and the corresponding cultural, economic and political impact on current institutions. The present organization of the Vietnamese education and training system is also described. Chapter Five discusses the current and newly proposed legislative and policy frameworks for Vietnamese community colleges. Finally Chapter Six provides policy recommendations for community colleges in Vietnam.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of important research findings related to exemplary policy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions such as community colleges.

Introduction

Three policy areas under extensive examination by TVET policy makers were described within the literature. First, policy makers are increasingly promoting the concept of lifelong learning. In order to accommodate the new globally competitive economic environment, extensive reform of tertiary education and training systems is necessary to encourage learners of all ages, not just young adults, to continually upgrade their skills and academic credentials (Patrinos and Linden, 2003). Second, governance and evaluation of skills training institutions needs to evolve from strict bureaucratic models to an outcome based evaluative paradigm. There is a growing understanding among policy makers that institutional governance models must balance the need for accountability to central governments and the responsibility to foster direct and meaningful links with local stakeholders. As a result, policy makers anticipate that more independent institutional governance would cultivate greater responsiveness to a wide variety of community stakeholders in both the private and public sectors, particularly employers (Friske, 1996). Finally, policy needs to facilitate skills training programming that is more relevant to the changing needs of the labour market. The public sector

accounts for a very large, in some cases full, portion of the funding for skills training institutions. Therefore, governments and taxpayers expect a proportionate and demonstrable benefit from the investment. Given the new demands for greater accountability, policy research demonstrated a fundamental shift in priorities and perspectives among policy makers, administrators and instructors at community colleges and other public sector education and training institutions (McEwan, 1995). Despite being publicly funded institutions, new policies paradoxically encourage these schools to become less focused on the needs of government. Instead of addressing the needs of governments that supplied funding, new policy urges institutions to become more responsive to the demands of employers, students and other local stakeholders. Therefore, responding quickly and effectively to the changing needs of the labour market is becoming the clear priority for policy makers (Kirst, 1990). The new policy challenges mean that a transformation from a government supply side orientation is necessary so that skills training institutions like community colleges become better able to identify and respond quickly to the demands of local and regional labour markets. In order to motivate learners to maintain their ongoing relevance to labour markets, policy amendments are necessary to encourage lifelong learning.

Lifelong Learning

Seng and Hwee (1997) defined “lifelong learning” simply as continuing the learning process throughout one’s life. As Hatton (1997) noted, this learning can occur at formal education and training institutions, at the workplace, or informally within the learners’ community or home. However, for the purposes of this study, research

discussion was focused on the reform necessary for promotion and delivery of *formally certified* education and training to lifelong learners. While the lifelong learning concept is not complex, its significance to policy makers in the education and training sector is growing in significance. Rapid technological change and international trade liberalization is creating a new “global knowledge economy” (Patrinos & Linden, 2003, p. 1). In the tertiary skills training sector, Patrinos and Linden (2003) discussed how the global knowledge economy influences public policy in three salient ways. First, rapid technological change, particularly information technology, constantly puts new demands on learners who must continually update their skills in order to remain relevant in the labour market. Second, technological change means that labour markets are in a continual state of flux. People reasonably expect that they will change their employer, or even their occupation, multiple times over their careers. Third, more open global markets put unprecedented competitive pressures on the productive capacities of employers and their employees. The effective application of knowledge and technology translates to greater productivity and consequently, higher wages. Indicative of this trend, argued Patrinos and Linden (2003), the value of unskilled labour in developed countries is decreasing in real terms as a result of the inability to compete with unskilled labour markets in developing countries. The constant demand for improved employee productivity puts an historically unprecedented emphasis on skills training and the application of knowledge.

In response to the development of the global knowledge economy, Seng and Hwee (1997) argued that traditional skills training policies needs to be transformed.

Tertiary skills training institutions, employers, and the adult learners themselves need a public policy environment that encourages continual skill upgrading. Seng and Hwee noted that, under a traditional skills training policy framework, adult learners are severely restricted from pursuing further formal education and training opportunities in four fundamental ways. First, to pursue further education and training, adult learners often need to exit the labour market and thus incur significant tuition direct costs and/or opportunity costs in terms of lost wages. Second, tertiary education and training institutions are often unwilling to articulate their programs with education and training certification from other organizations. Institutions are reticent to research academic credentials from other institutions. More fundamentally, institutions are profoundly reluctant to assume the risk of providing higher academic certification for learning that occurs outside their own institution. Regardless of the duplication, the preferred process is to categorically deny articulation and, instead, insist all certified learning occur within its own institution. Thus, institutions unnecessarily prolong education and training durations and further deter the participation of potential learners. Third, as discussed by Patrinos and Linden (2003) in Table 1, the traditional learning environment needs to be transformed in order to meet adult learners' distinctive needs. For example, traditional tertiary education and training programs focuses on rote memorization of information solely distributed by instructors. Contrasting the traditional environment, adult learners demand individual self-directed programs directly linked to the learners' practical day-to-day needs. Fourth, it is understood that reducing the barriers to adult learners does not necessarily, on its own, translate to a larger number of adult learners in formal education

and training programs. Titmus' (1999) study showed that the lower an adult learner's educational attainment, the less likely he or she will continue to learn in later life. Ironically, as noted by Seng and Hwee (1997), it is the unskilled potential learners who are the most threatened by the impact of the global knowledge economy and consequently the most in need of education and skill upgrading. Therefore, policy to facilitate lifelong learning must avoid the assumption that people will recognize a learning opportunity as a self-evident good. Policy needs to provide for tangible and immediate benefits that will motivate potential adult learners.

Table 1.

Traditional learning versus lifelong learning

Traditional Learning	Lifelong Learning
The teacher is the sole source of knowledge	Educators are guides to sources of knowledge
Learners receive knowledge from the teacher	People learn by doing
Learners work by themselves	People learn in groups and from one another
Tests are given to prevent progress until students have completely mastered a set of skills and to ration access to further learning	Assessment is used to guide learning strategies and identify pathways for future learning
All learners do the same thing	Educators develop individualized learning plans

Traditional Learning	Lifelong Learning
“Good” learners are identified and permitted to continue their education	People have access to learning opportunities over a lifetime

Note. Adapted from Patrinos & Linden (2003)

In particular, Patrinos and Linden (2003) argued that the lifelong learning concept poses particular challenges to communist and former communist countries. Education and training systems in these countries are extraordinarily rigid. Prior learning and existing skill certification are not recognized for the purposes of program articulation. Potential adult learners are unable to transfer academic credit and subsequently, were very reluctant to pursue new learning opportunities. Therefore, without an opportunity to articulate to a higher level of program certification, adult learners are unable to pass these terminal points in the education and training system. Many potential learners are faced with virtually no formal learning opportunities save abandoning his or her current vocational certification and entering a different formal learning program from its beginning. More fundamentally, Patrinos and Linden noted that communist and post-communist training systems focus almost exclusively upon rote memorization for learner evaluation. Critical thinking, decision making, and problem solving skills, which are the primary competencies required of adult learners in the global knowledge economy, are effectively omitted in the communist skills training system.

Unsurprisingly, as Beaupré (1997) discussed, many of the challenges to lifelong learning within the communist tertiary education and training system are evident in Vietnam. However, despite the challenges within tertiary education and skills training

system, Vietnam possesses a history of extraordinary success at the basic education and literacy levels. After reunification of the country in 1975, Beaupré noted that adult illiteracy was virtually eliminated within three years. Furthermore, Beaupré observed that there is in Vietnam a strong social consensus that values learning and supports the concept of lifelong learning. Vietnam's revolutionary leader (see Chapter Four), Ho Chi Minh is quoted as saying "Learning is as if there were no final rung to a ladder" (as cited by Beaupré, p. 105). Likewise, the prevailing Confucian philosophy in Vietnam actively encourages learning opportunities for all, regardless of age or social status. However, typical of communist and post communist countries and despite the growing imperatives made evident in the global learning economy, Beaupré acknowledged that Vietnam's tertiary education and training policy does not place a high priority on lifelong learning. As an overwhelmingly agrarian and developing country, Beaupré argued that Vietnam needs to focus on providing vocational skills training for adults, of all ages and academic backgrounds, that supports value-added agricultural processes. Furthermore, extensive "economic training" is needed in order to foster emerging private micro-enterprises as Vietnam makes the transition to a market economy (Beaupré, p. 106).

A policy framework that successfully encourages lifelong learning directly addresses four key characteristics of adult learners. First, through either prior formal or informal learning, Seng and Hwee (1997) observed that adult learners already possess vast knowledge and skills. Institutions need to recognize and certify all of potential learners' pre-existing knowledge. Second, due to ongoing work and family commitments, adult learners are generally able to participate only intermittently in the

learning process. As Seng and Hwee argued, institutions need to offer programs at the times and places convenient for the individual learner – not the institutions. Likewise, certification of learning achievement needs to be broken down into relatively small increments (e.g., one to three week courses). Short modularized courses permit the adult learner to complete certified programs at a pace dependent upon the learners' individual extra curricular factors. Third, as Seng and Hwee discussed, many potential adult learners remember very negative learning experiences earlier in life. A policy framework needs to recognize that, unlike younger learners, formally extending academic credentials is not a self evident good for many adult learners. Schools need to not only radically reform instructional methods but also must market the tangible benefits of lifelong learning to potential adult learners. Fourth, Patrinos and Linden (2003) argued that typical adult learners are more cognizant than younger learners of cost versus benefit of further education and training. If economic costs such as tuition and/or lost wages or social costs such as time away from family exceed the assessed long term benefit, potential adult learners typically choose not to participate in the formal learning process.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2004) argued that funding necessary to implement lifelong learning is most efficiently and effectively utilized when the investment is distributed among governments, employers and individual learners in proportion to their respective anticipated benefit. Patrinos and Linden (2003) argued that policy frameworks that facilitate public and private funding are successful because the policy effectively demonstrates benefits for (a) governments through community economic and/or social development and higher taxation revenues,

(b) employers through greater employee productivity, and (c) individual learners through increased wages and improved quality of life. Therefore, Seng and Hwee (1997) observed that policy frameworks successfully promoting lifelong learning address challenges both intrinsic and extrinsic to education and training institutions. Intrinsically, institutions need to recognize prior learning, provide more flexible avenues for study, and create a more hospitable learning environment for adult learners. Extrinsically, governments and the employers need to provide and promote clear, tangible, and immediate benefits that encouraged learners to pursue continuing learning opportunities at their own expense in terms of both time and money,.

Patrinos and Linden (2003) noted that the value of lifelong learning is gaining credibility with policy makers that are heavily influenced by the economic and social developments of the global knowledge economy. For tertiary education and training institutions, new priorities related to lifelong learning are beginning to have a transformative effect. Seng and Hwee (1997) observed that older adult learners are more and more common in formal learning programs and this is transforming how, when, where and even why education and training programs are designed and delivered. Governments are challenging community colleges and other tertiary education and training institutions to respond to the growing demands from learners of all ages for skills training relevant to the changing labour market. There are severe economic and social consequences if tertiary education and training institutions fail to respond appropriately to the new learning demands. Employers will become increasingly uncompetitive internationally which will exacerbate related economic and social issues such as poverty

and crime. Public sector education and training delivery costs are expected to increase substantially as the demand for more relevant learning opportunities increases. These costs must be shared between the individual, employers and governments based upon respective benefits. Therefore, policy needs to ensure education and training provided by public sector institutions is relevant to the labour market and that the public sector investment realizes a proportionate economic and/or social benefit. In short, a policy model effectively promoting lifelong learning has to encourage programming that is both flexible and relevant to diverse learner needs. The new emphasis on identifying and responding to local conditions means a fundamental shift for most education and training institutions that had traditionally focused on providing services to learners in an environment with few or no alternative education and training service providers. However, adult learners in the global knowledge economy now have many new choices. As part of the new emphasis on responsiveness to local potential learners and labour markets, policy makers are beginning to consider the appropriate roles for local stakeholders in more decentralized governance systems.

Institutional Governance

Governments traditionally maintain strict controls on decision making at community colleges and other publicly funding education and training institutions. In explaining classical structural theory, researchers such as Taylor (1911), Fayol (1916) and Weber (1922) observed that governments, like other large organizations, favor a centralized bureaucratic model of decision making. The centralized bureaucratic management paradigm is characterized by direct hierarchical lines of authority and the

unambiguous application of organizational policies and procedures. Furthermore, Weber in particular discusses structural theory as having an inherent belief that organizational effectiveness and efficiency was maximized through the application of reason. Therefore, derived from logical reasoning, solutions to similar problems can be replicated by the application of system-wide policy.

Historically, a reaction to bureaucratic centralism began with theorists such as Roethlisberger (1941), Maslow (1943), and McGregor (1957). Influenced by human relations theory, they challenged the classical structural assumption that organizations and their respective employees consistently behaved according to reason and that employees and other stakeholders unquestioningly share an organization's logical approach to maximizing efficiency and effectiveness. Human relations theory asserted that, in every scenario, various and sometimes competing interests among stakeholders in any organization negate the assumption that organizational decision making is always based upon logic and the need to maximize organizational effectiveness. Therefore, the human relation theorists, like McGregor, argued that there is no one best management prescription for all organizations. As a result, management policies and procedures should be based upon the merits and interests of individual circumstances.

In the public sector, the bureaucratic centralized model proposed tight control of government institutions within strict policies and procedures approved by elected, and other legitimate, bodies. However, human theorists such as McGregor (1957) demonstrated that the bureaucratic centralist model tends to impose standard processes that are often ineffective and inappropriate due to unique and unanticipated local

circumstances. Reacting to this dilemma between public accountability and local institutional effectiveness, management theorists such as Peters and Waterman (1982) proposed the benefits of the dual “loose-tight” approach to governance. Peters and Waterman argued that institutional governance that best promotes effectiveness and efficiency is neither categorically bureaucratic as classical structuralists proposed nor, as the human relation theorists argued, completely self-determined. The challenge to governance is to determine what was necessary and appropriate for only central governments to determine (i.e., “tight”) and what authority should governments delegate (i.e., “loose”) to the institutions themselves in order to better address unique local circumstances (Peters & Waterman, p. 448).

Frisk (1996) argued that there is a world-wide trend towards a more decentralized approach to governing public sector education and training systems. Frisk noted that there is an underlying shift in people’s attitudes and perceptions towards central governments. Parents and students demand that their unique circumstances be addressed and they are less tolerant of barriers established by seemingly counterproductive policies of distant central governments. In response to the more demanding public environment, many central governments are decentralizing institutional governance. Decentralization is defined as “the process in which subordinate levels of a hierarchy are authorized by a higher body to take decisions about the use of the organization’s resources” (Friske, p. 4). As Kirst (1990) noted, established local school boards demonstrate a longstanding decentralized governance model for primary and secondary education in many countries. Likewise, institutional boards at universities, based upon historical precedence, represent

governance autonomous from central governments. By comparison, Kirst argued that tertiary technical and vocational institutions generally remain tightly controlled in the bureaucratic centralist model. In fact, in many jurisdictions, technical and vocational education and training institutions are fully incorporated in central governments with managers, faculty, and support staff designated as government employees reporting within their respective ministerial bureaucracies. Nevertheless, Kirst observed that governance decentralization is occurring within the technical and vocational systems, albeit the evolution is much slower than of other types of institutions at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

The objectives of the decentralization process depend on the stakeholders' perspective. Friske (1996) noted that politicians, policy makers, administrators, faculty, parents, community and business groups often had distinct motivation in a decentralized governance model. As Friske described, stakeholders commonly anticipate a number of broad decentralization improvements as compared to the bureaucratic centralist model. As Friske observed, the anticipated decentralization improvements are based upon four broad assumptions. First, empowered teachers and administrators are the most able to make good decisions because they were the best informed. Presumably, better decision making translates to improved teaching processes and learning outcomes. Second, more local ownership over how resources are allocated translates to more efficient institutions. Centralized bureaucratic governance models require policy compliance and not necessarily efficiency. More flexibility is necessary to best address local circumstances. Third, Friske noted, given greater local ownership of a decentralized institution,

transferring a greater cost burden to local or regional stakeholders through taxation or fees is far more politically acceptable than under the bureaucratic centralist model. Fourth, as noted earlier, decentralization is a concept growing in popular attraction. Fiske observed that politicians and policy makers will anticipate a political gain through decentralizing reform but often neglect to subsequently provide institutions the resources necessary to improve local decision making capacity. Given these diverse and sometimes conflicting perspectives on decentralization, Fiske urged policy makers to ensure their goals are articulated to stakeholders and expectations are appropriately tempered.

Fiske (1996) pointed out that divergent motivation among stakeholders in the decentralization process commonly results in a number of hazards for policy makers. Chief among these dangers are a decentralization process that is initiated primarily, if not exclusively, by political considerations. In this scenario, decentralization is often perceived as a political panacea that can be adopted with a simple administrative change. However, without sufficient resources to support the decentralization process, it is doomed to failure. Without management training, for example, it is unreasonable to expect that administrators will be able execute their new decision making responsibilities successfully. Therefore, as Fiske (1996) discussed, it is critical that all stakeholders within a decentralized environment, not just politicians and policy makers, clarify their respective interests and develop a consensus on the purpose of the decentralization process. The consultation process must also determine how stakeholders will play ongoing supportive and meaningful roles in the decentralized governance model. As

Friske (1996) noted, decentralization reforms were most successful when stakeholders were active participants and had realistic expectations of their local institutions.

As Frisk (1996) earlier noted, the purpose of decentralization was to improve services through greater accountability to local stakeholders and communities. To address the growing public demands for greater accountability, local governing bodies use various instruments to evaluate educational institutions and programs. Kirst (1990) observed that in many cases, paradoxically, decentralization means that local governing bodies simply supplant the central bureaucracy with their own bureaucratic evaluation instruments. Policy and procedures are determined locally but local administrators are still evaluated based upon their compliance to the new locally determined bureaucratic regulations. Kirst acknowledged that decentralization under this bureaucratic model often does improve accountability to local stakeholders. However a much more fundamental improvement to governance change occurs by implementing evaluative frameworks that assess institutions, not based upon policy compliance, but, through measuring outcome achievement. Carver (1990) noted that outcome based evaluative models ensure accountability to central governments and local boards while empowering institutional personnel to apply practices and direct resources appropriate to individual circumstances.

The effectiveness of the outcomes based evaluative model, however, is based upon two critical practices. First, as Mitchell and Sackney (2000) noted, decision making autonomy given to administrators and teachers under a decentralized governance model rarely translates to improvements at the large scale that policy makers assume. Mitchell

and Sackney observed that administrators and teachers often lack the required management capacity. Also, given the prevailing organizational culture's previous emphasis upon strict policy compliance, there is a reticence to assume a new decision making authority. Therefore, in a decentralization process, Mitchell and Sackney urged policy makers to integrate professional development processes that address technical and attitudinal competency requirements and facilitate a transformation of organizational culture to one more facilitative of independent decision making. Second, for an outcome based model to be effectively applied, progress towards the institution's mandate has to be measurable (Dolence, Rowley, & Lujan, 1997). However, Dolence et al. cautioned policy makers that there is a tendency to select criteria that are easily measurable but have little or no relevance to how well the institution was performing relative to its mandate. Therefore, Dolence et al. observed that output based evaluation requires that outputs be both measurable and meaningful to stakeholders.

Programming Relevance

Greaney and Kellaghan (1996) observed that there is a global public perception that education systems are expending significant public resources yet students are not learning the skills they require to compete in the globally competitive economy. The widespread public perception of education's growing irrelevancy to employment combines with the public demands for governance decentralization and greater public accountability is leading to the increasing popularity of outcome based assessment frameworks among tertiary education and skills training institutions. While stakeholders in primary, secondary and even university institutions vigorously debate the merits of

various measurable performance indicators, Kirst (1990) noted that determining appropriate and measurable criteria for community colleges and other TVET institutions is not difficult. Kirst observed that the purpose of technical and vocational education and training institutions is to prepare their graduates for employment or self-employment. Demonstrating the longevity of this concept, Kaufman (1968) observed over thirty five years ago that the results of training programs that prepare students for employment and/or self employment are easily measured. Commentators such as Sharaf (1994) proposed that evaluative criteria such as training-related employment rates, training-related employment salary levels, student and employer satisfaction rates, and student retention rates are all sound indicators for achievement for the TVET institutions. Furthermore, other researchers such as Kirkpatrick (1994) observed that training program costs can be weighed against economic and social benefits such as increased employment and greater tax contributions. Conversely, Rehman and Nejad (1994) noted that institutions whose exclusive mandate is not training for employment or self employment, such as primary and secondary schools that socialize children and adolescents or universities responsible for delivering liberal arts education or general interest programs to adults, generally are less able to demonstrate measurable achievement towards their stated objectives. While few would argue that primary, secondary and liberal arts education does not have tremendous value, its intangible nature makes it difficult, if not impossible, to analyze program costs versus program benefit.

As Lankard (1995) noted, the success or failure of TVET institutions, such as community colleges, rests largely on how well the schools' programming reflects the

needs of local and regional communities. Worldwide, there are many different processes used to help ensure that training programs provide the skills relevant to labour markets. Lankard observed that employers and community leaders are either formally (as board members) or informally (as advisors) integrated with institutional governance. Likewise, at the program level, Lankard noted that employers and other key community stakeholders must take an active role in determining learning outcomes if continued relevancy to the labour market is to be assured. A number of approaches are common including the use of Competency Based Education (CBE) where curricula are developed around key skills, or “competencies”, identified by employers (Lankard, p. 4). However, while the partnership between TVET institutions and community is vital, as Rehman and Nejad (1994) proposed, it is neither necessary nor preferable to prescribe in policy specific methods that standardize or compel cooperation among these stakeholders. Lankard pointed out that central governments did have a legitimate role to enforce national training standards which are necessary to produce graduates able to meet employment standards nationwide. However, the standards should derive from employers themselves – not government and not academics. Moreover, the standards need to be minimal requirements and must permit some fluctuation to address unique regional or local labour market needs. As Lankard discussed, liaison between TVET institutions and employers is most effective when administrators and teachers have the autonomy to act in response to the unique circumstances of the institution and its respective stakeholders. Furthermore, Lankard pointed out that sincere institutional collaboration with employers must be mutually voluntary and in response to a perceived

reciprocal and tangible gain or benefit. Therefore, genuine and meaningful cooperation among community colleges and their stakeholders can not be compelled through legislation.

As Lankard (1995) discussed, administrators and instructors at TVET institutions need the autonomy necessary to invent, innovate and adapt their own cooperative frameworks that meet the unique needs of their stakeholders. However, Lankard noted that autonomy does not mean that administrators and instructors are unaccountable to the local, regional and/or national governments that fund these institutions. As Rehman and Nejad (1994) discussed, accountability among TVET institutions is most appropriately maintained through outcome assessment, such as graduate employment and self employment rates. Lankard observed that a good example of an appropriate accountability framework is the *Carl D. Perkins vocational and applied education act* (United States Department of Education, 1998). TVET institutions under the act are required by law to report outcomes such as graduate employment. However, Lankard (1995) noted, the act does not legislate how achievement towards outcome objectives should be achieved by individual institutions. Alberta Advanced Education (2000) demonstrated how that Canadian province takes the accountability concept further by basing a portion of future institutional funding upon the achievement benchmark outcomes. However, while Alberta institutions' funding depends (in part) on outcome achievement, how the outcomes are achieved is left to the institutions and their respective stakeholders to decide.

Outcome criteria or “key performance indicators” (KPIs) defined in policy has to be both measurable and meaningful (Dolence et al., 1997). Outcomes selected must be meaningful in that they indicate progress towards the achievement of an institution’s mandate. KPIs are measurable and the data has to be collected frequently and quantified without an onerous cost. Dolence et al. observed that measurable indicators can be derived from either qualitative or quantitative data. Dolence et al. (1997) noted that qualitative KPIs, despite being inherently subjective, can be measured. Examples of important qualitative criteria include the satisfaction levels of key stakeholders such as students, employers, and faculty which can be recorded through self assessment using a measurable Likert scale in a questionnaire or an assessment done in focus groups against an agreed upon rubric. Dolence et al. noted that quantitative data collection processes are less subjective. Lankard observed that application, enrolment, retention and employment and self employment rates are easily accessible and are meaningful indicators of success for TVET institutions. However, as Dolence et al strongly recommended, data collection instruments and processes such as questionnaires or focus groups need to be standardized to ensure the integrity of the data collected. Lankard also recommended the establishment of an audit process, similar to that necessary for financial reporting, to ensure the legitimacy of KPI data reported to central governments and other stakeholders.

Chapter Summary

As the preceding discussion of relevant research findings demonstrates, the emphasis on lifelong learning, improved institutional governance and program relevance is a central influence upon in an increasingly decentralized policy environment. The

escalating use of technology, particularly information technology, and increasing global economic competitiveness is changing how, where, when, why and to whom education and training services were provided. Traditional policies that promote publicly funded and government regulated institutional monopolies are being challenged. Learners are less willing to conform to bureaucratic institutional processes that had little or no bearing on their learning needs. In response to this new environment, policy makers' common response is the decentralization of institutional governance. With the decision makers and the stakeholders in closer proximity, policy makers assume that decentralization translates to more effective and efficient institutions. However, decentralization also means that policy makers need to provide a significant investment in professional development for local managers and instructors to help facilitate a gradual yet vital shift in institutional culture to a local environment more welcoming of greater local decision making authority. To best serve the needs of their respective local and regional learners, administrators and faculty that formally valued and promoted bureaucratic compliance must begin to foster a spirit of risk taking and entrepreneurship. However, despite greater local independence, institutions must now conform to an outcome based accountability framework. The outcomes model is particularly apt for tertiary TVET institutions that enjoy an unambiguous mandate - to prepare learners for employment and self employment. The institutional outcomes, such as graduate employment rates, are both easily measurable and valid indicators of mandate achievement. However, to ensure the integrity of the evaluation process and thereby maintain stakeholder confidence, policy makers must develop stringent processes for data collection and reporting.

Based upon literature findings, it is possible to identify clear exemplary aspects of modern TVET policy. However, as political culture and economic conditions vary by jurisdiction so does policy. However, despite the recognition of exemplary models, a process of simple policy duplication of ideal policy does not take into account unique political, cultural or economic considerations and, thus, will fail to address the policy problem. In the place of policy duplication, a more sophisticated policy analysis methodology is needed in order to make policy recommendations that fit individual economic, political and social circumstances.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Unlike a typical education research approach, the project used Nesbit's (1999) "policy-oriented" research method. While the purpose of "fundamental" research is "to extend the frontiers of knowledge" (Nesbit, p. 64), the function of policy-oriented research is to help inform, implement, or monitor a policy decision. Therefore, there is a significant distinction between the purposes, and hence the results, of fundamental and policy-oriented research. Fundamental research produces "contributions to knowledge, understanding, or theory" while policy-oriented research results in "recommendations for decision or action" (Nesbit, p. 64). Whereas policy-oriented research clearly relies on knowledge and theories to support its recommendations, it is distinctive from fundamental research because it must advocate a course of action (or inaction) based on perceived and anticipated risks and benefits. Therefore the policy-oriented approach does not yield findings in the traditional research sense. Instead, theories based upon fundamental research are applied to the development and rationalization of potential future-oriented policy recommendations.

Primary data sources for this study such as the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) and other relevant documents have been retrieved by the researcher from the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and translated from the original Vietnamese. Other primary documents include the Tra Vinh College Community College Strategic Plan (2003), inclusive of a local labour market analysis of

Tra Vinh province, translated from the original Vietnamese. The researcher is currently the project manager for the Vietnam Canada Community College Project (VCCCP) funded in part by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The project assists the establishment of the TVCC. The success and failure of innovative new approaches associated with the TVCC experience are cited as examples to support recommendations for a preferred community college policy environment in Vietnam. Other primary and secondary sources are used to provide background information on recent history and analyses of the current political, economic, and cultural environment

Using the case study methodology as discussed by Sturman (1999), the TVCC offers an opportunity to test new processes within the Vietnamese education and training system. The programs piloted in the TVCC case study relate particularly to key policy recommendations of the study: lifelong learning, governance, and program relevance. Therefore, the TVCC experience is a single site educational case study. Using the policy-oriented approach, the TVCC experience provides valuable data on how theories related to the policy recommendations should be applied within the unique Vietnamese policy environment. Therefore integrating the TVCC case study helps to ensure the recommendations made using the policy-oriented research approach are supported by practical experience.

This chapter discusses the key theoretical foundations of this study's methodology. First, the policy-oriented approach used by this study is discussed. In particular, critical distinctions are made between the policy-oriented approach and typical fundamental education research methodology. Second, in order to establish a conceptual

framework for the development of new policy recommendations, the applicable theoretical foundations of policy analysis are examined. Third, the principles of the qualitative single-site case study data used in this project are described. Fourth, the Tra Vinh Community College single-site case study data collection process is described.

Policy Oriented Research

As discussed in Chapter One, this study used Nesbit's (1999) policy-oriented research method. Nesbit observed that the purpose of policy-oriented research is to recommend to decision makers a specific course of action or inaction. Nesbit further commented that, while policy-oriented research has to consider fundamental research that is directly related to the policy problem, it also needs to assess indirect current and potential future political considerations. Pal (1987) noted the significance of this distinction. Pal recognized that the perceptions and responses of those impacted by a policy (i.e., stakeholders) are pivotal to the success or failure of that policy. For example, Pal observed that results of fundamental research are not easily replicated across jurisdictions at the policy level because of the various roles and reactions of the different stakeholders. If not anticipated and incorporated within the policy itself, Nesbit noted that stakeholder responses could lead to unintended policy consequences. For example, lower tuition rates could increase low enrollments at tertiary education institutions. However, lower tuition could also decrease institutional funding and negatively impact program quality. In fact, tuition decreases may not increase enrolments if the central barriers to tertiary education are, for example, academic pre-requisites and not high tuition rates. Therefore, in order to avoid such miscalculations and produce relevant and

future-oriented policy recommendations, the project utilizes an analysis of current policy together with data from a relevant Vietnamese community college case study. The policy analysis provides a basis for understanding public policy issues and the political and social factors that affected decision makers in Vietnam. The case study findings demonstrate successful practices at a Vietnamese community college and gauge the probable stakeholder reactions to the recommended policy reforms. By combining these methods, this study is able to provide recommendations that are both grounded in the Vietnamese context and also provide educators and decision makers with innovative new ideas to facilitate further policy reform.

Policy Analysis

Pal (1987) defined public policy as a course of action or inaction chosen by governments to address a given problem or related set of problems. Policy analysis is further defined as the “disciplined application of intellect to public problems” (Pal, p. 19). Therefore, policy analysis is not the reiteration of conventional public policy assumptions but a thoughtful consideration and accounting for the myriad of political powers and interests that influence perceptions of public problems and their potential policy responses. As outlined in Figure 1, Pal’s policy analysis model has two broad subsets: academic policy analysis and applied policy analysis. First, academic policy analysis explains why policy is developed and specifically focuses on the study of external policy influences such as economic and political factors as well as the cultural and bureaucratic perceptions that heavily influenced policy development and implementation. Second, applied policy analysis examines policy impact after a policy is developed and

implemented. Applied policy analysis demonstrates the results of the policy and determines the intended and/or unintended consequences from policy implementation. In short, Pal noted that academic policy analysis explains policy development and applied policy analysis evaluates the results.

<i>Academic Policy Analysis</i>		<i>Applied Policy Analysis</i>
Policy Determinants	Policy Content	Policy Impact
Political Environment Economy Bureaucracy Media Psychology Culture, etc.	Problem definition Goals Instruments, etc.	Intended consequences Unintended

Note. Adapted from Pal (1987)

Figure 1. Academic policy analysis versus applied policy analysis

Policy Analysis Methods

Three broad methods are used in both academic and applied policy analyses. First, Pal (1987) described the “process” methodology used largely in academic policy analysis to explain policy in terms of the influences (i.e., determinants), upon the policy making process. For example the role of interest groups, bureaucrats, and/or politicians in policy development are examined using the process methodology of policy analysis. Second, Pal observed that the “descriptive” methodology explains and interprets policy content primarily for reference purposes by bureaucrats responsible for policy implementation. Third, Pal noted that the “policy evaluation” methods focus upon policy content as it related not to its development but rather policy impact. Patton (1982) argued that policy evaluation, when most useful, must collect reliable and measurable data that

demonstrates the extent of the policy's effectiveness. Patton observed that "practical evaluation" both assesses policy outcomes and indicates potential policy amendments that would likely improve future outcomes achievement. Therefore, Patton concluded that effective policy needs to include a thorough evaluative function that includes the collection of the data to measure progress towards policy objectives.

Pragmatic Considerations in Policy Analysis

Guba and Lincoln (1989) observed that, in addition to measurable data, policy makers are also affected by other imprecise yet potent policy influences. The measured benefit under a current policy is, of course, a principal factor in future policy development. However, Guba and Lincoln note that other policy determinants are more often based upon political interests or perceptions rather than measurable indications of efficiency and/or effectiveness. Without appropriate consideration of the competing interests within the bureaucracy and other leading stakeholder groups, a policy would not succeed regardless of how rooted it is within empirical reason. Pal (1987) noted, if properly implemented, the practical policy evaluative approach using measurable evaluation can act as a catalyst upon often conservative perspectives within bureaucracies. Pal observed that, regardless of the potential benefits, bureaucracies tend to minimize risk by implementing change incrementally rather than whole scale. Therefore, Pal (1987) and Guba and Lincoln (1989) agreed that the culture and interests of the bureaucracy are critical considerations in any effort to develop and implement new policy. Therefore, policy recommendations need to consider how change would impact

the bureaucracy and how bureaucratic interests and perceptions would either support or erode progress towards the policy recommendation's objectives.

Case Studies

Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) described a case study as the examination of a specific phenomenon. Gall et al. observed that case study research could focus on one instance or "case" because of its "intrinsic interest" or it could compare multiple instances in order to test the general application of a hypothesis. Gall et al. noted that during the case study, or in the subsequent analysis, the researcher attempts to identify from the descriptive data instances that relate to other research findings in the subject literature. Gall et al. observed that case studies could be selected because they were easily available and/or interesting to the researcher. However, the significance of the case study needs to be described and demonstrated relative to the phenomenon studied.

The TVCC Case Study

The TVCC case was selected for three reasons. First, the TVCC is an atypical example of the nine community colleges in Vietnam. The TVCC operated in manner (see Chapter Five) that is distinct from other community colleges and, indeed, all other tertiary institutions in the country. The experimental nature of the TVCC provided a rare opportunity at the local level to apply innovative practices within the tertiary education system. The success of the innovation at the TVCC had potential to be replicated at other community colleges regionally and nationally. Second, the TVCC was a politically important experiment for the Vietnamese and Canadian governments. A number of international agencies were adapting potential models for community colleges in

Vietnam. Analyses of the lessons learned at community colleges like the TVCC were vital in order for the community college experiment to yield meaningful reform of the tertiary education system nation wide. Third, as the project manager of the VCCCP, the researcher had extraordinary access to the TVCC in order to collect the necessary data.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process in this study utilized academic policy analysis as describe by Pal (1987). With particular reference to the research question and sub questions, the analyses focused on current policy and practices related to lifelong learning, effective institutional governance, and training program relevance to local and regional labour markets. Exemplary models in these fields were discussed (see Chapter Two). However, the study had to also examine the cultural, political, economic, and other policy determinants that limited the adoption in Vietnam of the exemplary models. This was done by contrasting the exemplary models with the relevant sections of current and new policy such as the *Decision of the minister of education and training for the promulgation of the provisional regulation of community colleges* (MOET, 2002), the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998), and the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004). Recommendations for new policy were heavily influenced by the successful and innovative practices implemented at the TVCC. Data on this case study was collected from reporting based upon measurable indicators within the *TVCC Strategic Plan* (Tra Vinh Community College, 2003) and the researcher's observations. Analysis of this case study data provided greater consideration of the Vietnamese policy

determinants that would heavily influence the success or failure of the policy recommendations.

Ethics

The data collected in this study was all in the public domain. No data were collected from individuals. As a result there were no ethical risks in this study.

Chapter Summary

Pal's (1987) academic policy analysis model was used in this study to compare and contrast exemplary, current, and new draft policy and legislation. The academic analysis identified the policy deficit between exemplary and current policy. This deficit combined with data from the case study and served to identify key policy determinants within the Vietnamese community college policy environment. Furthermore, data from the TVCC single site case study were analyzed and successful policy innovation were identified in the areas of "lifelong learning", effective institutional governance, and program relevance to local and regional labour markets. As Nestbit (1999) discussed, the purpose of the policy oriented research approach is to provide recommendations to decision makers for future policy action or inaction. The project was not conducting fundamental research and there were no findings typical of this type of study in education. It was recognized that the data collected at the TVCC case study were not typical of other community colleges. However, the study's analysis did produce sound recommendations for policy reform that have proven successful on single-site basis within the current Vietnamese policy environment. The study recognized that it remains the Vietnamese policy makers' responsibility to conduct the final assessment of potential

risk and benefit that may lead to the implementation of new policy based upon the project's recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEXT

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) occupies approximately 280,000 km² on the southeastern edge of continental Asia - bordered by China to the north, Laos and Cambodia to the west and the Gulf of Tonkin, the South China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand to the east and south. Vietnam's two principal cities are Hanoi, the political capital in the Red River Delta, and Ho Chi Minh City, the country's commercial centre formerly known as Saigon. Socially and economically, Vietnam is primarily an agrarian country with approximately three quarters of the country's 81 million people living in rural areas (World Bank, 1997). The ethnic Vietnamese (Kinh) comprise approximately 85% of the country with some 15 other ethnic and tribal groups making up the remainder. Demographically, the country is very young as a result of a baby boom that began upon reunification of Vietnam and the establishment of a lasting peace in 1975. As a result of this ongoing baby boom, currently over half of all Vietnamese are under the age of 20 years (World Bank).

History

The beginning of modern Vietnam can be traced back to the Red River Delta around present day Hanoi. In the 10th century occupying Chinese armies were expelled from the Red River Delta by the indigenous Kinh people, thus marking the originating point of the modern Vietnamese state. Protracted conflict occurred over the next centuries with the Chinese to the north and the southward expansion of the Kinh

population. This expansion led to the development of a Vietnamese imperial state along the South China Sea and into the Mekong Delta. France's colonial ambitions in Vietnam materialized in the early 19th century with the introduction of Catholic missionaries and mercantile traders (Porter, 1993). This led to a series of conflicts that resulted in the Treaty of Saigon in 1862 when Vietnam's Emperor Tu Duc agreed to cede Saigon and its surrounding provinces to French control. The French continued to extend their colonial possessions until 1883 when France declared its "protectorate" over the entirety of Vietnam (Turley, 1993).

Determined and organized Vietnamese resistance to colonizing forces began in earnest in 1940 when, during World War II and with Vichy Regime's consent, Japan supplanted the French and began its occupation of the country. It was at this time that the charismatic head of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), Ho Chi Minh (born Nguyen Sinh Cung) became recognized widely as one of the principal leaders of the combined Vietnamese factions resisting the occupation (Turley, 1993). Ho Chi Minh returned from a long exile in France, Russia and China where he was heavily influenced by communist revolutionary perspectives on the cause and effect nature of capitalism and colonialism. However, in the interests of building solidarity against the occupation amongst communist revolutionary and non-communist nationalist forces, Ho Chi Minh outwardly tempered his revolutionary principles (Porter, 1993). As a result, under his leadership, Ho Chi Minh was able to forge a coalition of revolutionaries and nationalists into the newly formed "League for the Independence of Vietnam" or "Viet Minh" (Porter).

Resistance to the Japanese was strongest in the north of Vietnam where the occupation was particularly brutal and where Chinese nationalist and revolutionary Maoist forces were able to supply the Viet Minh along the northern border (Elliot, 1993). As the war drew to a close, the Japanese occupation grew increasingly vicious. Crops were diverted to the war effort from local markets. This resulted in a massive famine in spring of 1945 causing an estimated two million deaths, mostly in the north of Vietnam (Porter, 1993). The famine bolstered indigenous support for armed resistance behind the Viet Minh. In Hanoi, with the defeat of the Japanese in September 1945, Ho Chi Minh publicly declared the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).

France and other Allied nations, however, did not recognize the DRV. By early 1946 France was able to reassert its control over all of Vietnam despite ongoing Viet Minh armed resistance, particularly in the north of the country (Turley, 1993). As resistance to the French grew, the Viet Minh became more openly communist in its philosophic disposition and dependence upon support by the Soviet Union and Chinese Maoists grew (Turley). Fearing the spread of communism in Indochina, the United States recognized the Associated State of Vietnam (ASV) - the colonial government established by the French (Turley). Within days of this action both the Soviet Union and the new People's Republic of China recognized the DRV under the Viet Minh and Vietnam emerged as an important Cold War battleground.

In late 1953 French paratroopers occupied the frontier town of Dien Bien Phu in an effort to disrupt Viet Minh supplies from China and to limit growing resistance in neighboring Laos. In their largest victory to date, Viet Minh defeated the French forces

and forced France to agree to demarcate the country at the 17 ° N parallel (Porter, 1993). The formerly warring parties declared that the north would be governed by the Viet Minh and in the south the French would remain. These two entities became known as North Vietnam and South Vietnam.

By 1955, France's imperial ambitions were shrinking and its influence in South Vietnam was waning (Elliot, 1993). However, perceiving the expansion of communism during the height of the Cold War, the United States (US) soon filled the void left by the French as the prime support to South Vietnam. This external support was essential to sustaining the corrupt and unpopular government in South Vietnam (Porter, 1993). Insurgencies continued with varying degrees of support for the North Vietnamese government. The US continued to prop up South Vietnam with heavy economic and military aid. However, direct military intervention took the form of only military advisors.

By 1959, the Viet Minh began to take a direct role in the insurgency in the south and by 1965 South Vietnamese control was generally restricted to major centres and immediate surrounding areas (Turley, 1993). After a reputed shelling of a US ship off the coast of North Vietnam, the United States Congress overwhelmingly passed, on August 10, 1964, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that authorized "all necessary steps" to repel the insurgency (Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, 1964, p. 2). US soldiers landed in South Vietnam and air strikes against North Vietnam quickly ensued.

By the late 1960s, North Vietnam was badly damaged from bombing. However, the remaining industry was moved to rural areas and dedicated almost exclusively to the

war effort. This determined effort soon yielded results in the south. American and South Vietnamese forces on the ground and massive bombing in North Vietnam and Cambodia were unable to abate the insurgency. Viet Minh forces began to expand to urban areas from their rural roots.

In January 1973, a peace was brokered and the US forces left South Vietnam. A year later the armed insurrection against the South Vietnamese government recommenced and by May 1975, Vietnam was reunified under Viet Minh forces and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) was declared.

Reunification and Doi Moi

The one party revolutionary communist state and exclusive state control of the economy was stringently implemented throughout the newly reunified country. Suppression was acute for those associated with the former government of South Vietnam or the “Saigon Regime” and a mass exodus of “boat people” ensued causing an international refugee crisis (Turley, 1993). Further international conflict ensued with Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia in 1979. This, in turn, led to China’s brief incursion in northern Vietnam and intensified the communist government’s ideological fervor (Turley, 1993). Politically and economically isolated from other countries in the region, Vietnam became exclusively and increasingly dependent upon political, economic and military assistance from the Soviet Union.

By the mid 1980s, Vietnam was a country at a crossroads. The Soviet Union’s imminent political and economic collapse meant Soviet assistance that the government was so dependent upon suddenly came to a virtual halt. The economy still stressed

military priorities and the population's expectations in 1975 of a peace time boom were only met with seemingly unyielding war time austerity. Furthermore, particularly in the agricultural sector, the dislocations caused by dogmatic imposition of the state controlled economy in the south intensified the economic upheaval. While Vietnam was a regional military superpower, economic weakness especially relative to the emerging neighboring countries caused a "deep sense of humiliation" in the government and the population as whole (Elliot, 1993, p. 79). As time drew on, the economic and political crisis intensified to such a degree that it portended the complete collapse of the state. Seeking an avenue of relief, the governing Communist Party was forced into a period of deep introspection.

At the Sixth National Congress in December 1986, the Communist Party announced the adoption of a policy called "doi moi" or "economic renovation" (Elliot, 1993). In a fundamental shift from traditional communist ideology, private enterprise was permitted and extensive economic links were forged with the non-socialist world. Such drastic measures demonstrated the depth of the crisis faced by the Party (Turley, 1993). The economy had virtually collapsed and maintaining political and economic seclusion with the Soviet Union showed no prospect of improving the situation. Likewise, the disintegration of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the successful market-led economic reforms in the People's Republic of China created a situation where the party leadership and the public at large had lost faith in the infallibility of strict communist ideology (Turley).

The objective of doi moi reforms was to create a "market economy with a socialist direction" (Turley, 1993, p. 2). Liberal democratic political reform

implemented, to varying degrees of success, in Central and Eastern Europe was clearly not the objective of the Vietnamese reforms argued Elliot (1993). In fact, similar to the reform movement in China, the very purpose of these market economic reforms is, paradoxically, to maintain the primacy of the Communist Party (Elliot). Thus, given this contradiction, Communist Party reformers faced a stark challenge – achieving fundamental economic change without threatening the Communist Party’s political monopoly. The resulting, *doi moi* policy therefore promotes the “preservation of the leading role of the communist party” above all (Elliot, 1993, p. 65). Market driven economic concepts have been implemented using a very gradual approach. For example, the cooperative and private sector operate legally but are subject to varying degrees of administrative constraints that reflect the Communist Party’s historical antipathy towards private ownership (Elliot).

In the West, Turley (1993) argued, analogies to the fall of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe were commonly applied to Vietnam in the expectation that liberal democratic political reforms would necessarily follow economic changes. However, to date the reforms have been noteworthy in achieving both policy objectives: economic growth and political stability (Turley). Living standards have increased substantially and annual economic growth approached 10% (World Bank, 1997). Despite major economic restructuring, the political system in Vietnam remained stable. As Turley noted, the Vietnamese situation is vastly different to Central and Eastern Europe. The Vietnamese revolution was steeped in anti-colonial and nationalist struggles and much of the population still has first-hand experience of the war years. Unlike Central

and Eastern Europe where socialism was instilled largely by foreign Soviet forces, as discussed by Turley, pervasive nationalism serves to strengthen the Communist Party in Vietnam much like it does in China. Therefore, economic progress served to reinforce a nationalist passion (Porter, 1993). This national pride propelled the market reform process. Furthermore, as argued by Porter, the success of the market economy ironically increased backing for the Communist Party which was often seen as the traditional protectors and benefactors of Vietnamese nationalism.

Today, despite the political stability and economic success, there remain significant challenges and threats to the doi moi process. As discussed by Porter (1993), the market reforms disrupted the pattern of benefit distribution under the state controlled economic system. As noted by Elliot (1993), workers within State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and government employees suffered a drastic curtailment of their benefits and many jobs were lost in this sector. The bureaucracy itself is a primary impediment to doi moi because reform directly contradicts bureaucrats' stringent and prevalent communist ideology. Likewise, as discussed by Porter, reforms very often threaten the heretofore supremacy of bureaucrats in many economic sectors. The bureaucracy is comprised of many Communist Party ideologues and "heroic fighters" from the war years (Turley, 1993, p. 46). Despite the Party's doi moi policy, Porter notes that many bureaucrats, especially senior bureaucrats, still bear a tremendous distrust of the market economy. Furthermore, the legitimization of the private or "non-public" sector requires a complete new skill set within the bureaucracy (Porter). Instead of *dictating* outputs from a centrally planned economy, bureaucrats must now *manage* the economy in consideration

of the legitimate interests of the private sector. The capacity of the bureaucracy to manage the economic reforms within this new environment has been sorely tested. Many bureaucrats, especially those with a history of command during the war years, are unable to meet these new technical and managerial demands (Porter).

The Vietnamese distrust of the market economy is not solely derived from a socialist ideology. The bureaucracy's suspicions are reinforced by a Confucian "suspicion of private interests and their impact on the public good" or specifically goods acquired "not through their own labour" (Elliot, 1993, p. 67). Likewise, as argued by Porter (1993), Confucian beliefs and customs common in Vietnamese society, such as the unqualified respect for elders, significantly hinder the reform process in a bureaucracy dominated by stalwart ideologue senior bureaucrats.

Turley (1993) proposed the doi moi reforms to date succeeded in spite and not because of the Vietnamese bureaucracy. Reforms to date focused on the encouragement of foreign investment and the curtailment of the direct government participation in the economy in the form of SOEs. Growth rates approaching double digits were achieved not because of government action but rather because of the state's retreat from many sectors (Turley).

In light of the success to date of doi moi policy, the government was heretofore willing to "tolerate bureaucratic malfeasance and ineptitude" (Turley, 1993, p. 47). However, in response to two interdependent factors, the government's tolerance of the bureaucracy's incapacity to actively support market reforms appears to be coming to an end. First, initial economic growth was in rapid response to introduction of private

enterprise and, especially, the newfound influx of foreign capital into the Vietnamese economy. However, presently there are troubling indicators that the Vietnamese economy will be unable to sustain comparable growth rates over the long term. Current and ongoing stress in the labour market has potential to provoke economic and political instability (Turley). As a result of the post-war baby boom the labour market needs to accommodate over 1.5 million new entrants in to the labour market each year (World Bank, 1997). Underemployment is growing rapidly as skills taught at the vocational and higher education levels remain unchanged since the initiation of *doi moi* reforms (World Bank). Private employers and graduates suffer from the lack of appropriately skilled human resource supply from public education and training institutions. As a result, many potential new jobs remain vacant. As discussed by the World Bank (1997), Vietnamese employers' returns on investment for human resource development are low. Competition among employers for appropriately skilled staff is intense and, as a result, skilled workers are highly mobile in the labour market. With new entrants to the labour market unable to meet employers' requirements or access appropriate skills training, economic growth threatens to slow substantially. Furthermore, unless the education and training system in Vietnam can better address employer demand, social stability will be threatened by the accumulating number of young Vietnamese unable to meet growing expectations for employment and self employment (Porter, 1993).

Turley (1993) discussed the second indication that policy makers' are beginning to lose tolerance of the intransigent bureaucracy. While successful in initiating tremendous economic growth, the *doi moi* reforms have substantially increased economic

and social disparity. The growing prosperity, particularly among the burgeoning urban middle class, has created an economic and social disparity particularly in comparison with rural communities. Ironically, enjoying the most prosperity under the doi moi reforms are the entrepreneurial groups in the south of Vietnam that suffered government suspicion and repression upon reunification. This disparity within an economic environment growing more capitalist oriented clearly worries the Communist Party. In response to these Party concerns, the 7th National Congress in 1991 defined socialism in Vietnam as an ideology that works in harmony with the private sector while still stressing social and economic equity. The 7th National Congress (1991) proceedings state:

The socialism that our people are building is a society of people who have been liberated, of a working people who have taken control of their country; which has a highly developed economy and advanced rich and national culture; in which everyone is fed and clothed, free and happy, with the requisites to pursue their individual fulfillment; social justice and guaranteed democracy; unity among all ethnic groups, equality and mutual help, and friendly relations with all people of the world. (as quoted in Elliot, 1993, p. 65)

The government recognizes that accessible and effective education and training services are vital to maintaining a necessary sense of equity of opportunity among the population (World Bank, 1997). As a result, government concern over potentially high tuition has made it very hesitant to permit private (or “non-public”) participation in the education sector (Viet Nam News, 2005). However, if the public education and training

sector is not able to radically reorient itself in order to effectively collaborate with *non-governmental* stakeholders, young Vietnamese will remain unable to succeed in the new labour market, and the conditions required for equality of opportunity within the re-defined understanding of a socialist economy will not develop. Furthermore, this lack of opportunity within a market economy is a significant threat to the long-term legitimacy of the government and the primacy of the Party (Porter, 1993). New draft legislation such as the *11th draft education act* (National Assembly, 2004) and the *Decision of the ministry of education and training: promulgation of the provisional regulation of community college* (MOET, 2002) are important efforts to build a new and more responsive education and training system. The clear challenge to policy makers is to make tertiary institutions more responsive to all stakeholders within the new market economy environment while, paradoxically, still maintaining the primacy of the Party. Unless both of these challenges are met the proposed reforms will either remain unimplemented by the bureaucracy or have little or no impact on system relevance to the market economy. Policy makers must therefore utilize innovative approaches in new policies in order to meet the substantial challenge in this vital sector.

Education and Training System

Vietnam's education system begins at three years of age with optional nursery and kindergarten programming for up to three years. Primary education, compulsory since 1991, begins for most students at the age of six years but students in rural areas often begin later (World Bank, 1997). Primary education is delivered over five years (from September to June) upon which time students graduate to lower secondary schools for an

additional four years. Finally three years of upper secondary education completes the secondary system.

Virtually all children in Vietnam participate in primary education – resulting in a national literacy rate at 88%, much higher than its regional neighbors (World Bank, 1997). Gender disparities in basic education are relatively small within the regional context with girls' enrolment at 90% that of boys (World Bank). Inequities for ethnic minorities persist however with their literacy rates in many rural and remote communities half the national average. Ethnic participation rates in primary and secondary schools remain less than half their proportion in the general population (World Bank).

The skills training system in Vietnam still follows closely the classic Soviet model as outlined by Soltys (1997). Certified vocational training is delivered over three years at technical and vocational secondary schools. These secondary vocational schools are dedicated by sector in six broad categories: (a) agriculture, (b) construction, (c) culture and fine arts, (d) industry, (e) trade and services, and (f) transportation and communications. While the graduates of the vocational secondary schools are eligible for university enrolment, vocational graduates are most frequently supposed to be placed for employment in State Owned Enterprises (SOEs). Here advanced and ongoing in-service skills training would occur as part of the graduates' employment.

As noted in *Figure 2. Vietnam's Education and Training System*, post-secondary education in Vietnam emulates the Soviet model with two broad types of institutions (World Bank, 1997). Firstly, universities provide education and training at the four and five year bachelor degree and post graduate levels. Secondly, colleges deliver the three

year “associate” degree level. The college level traditionally serves only 10 % of the post-secondary students in Vietnam and approximately half of the current fifty five Vietnamese colleges serve as teachers’ colleges for service in primary and lower secondary schools (World Bank).

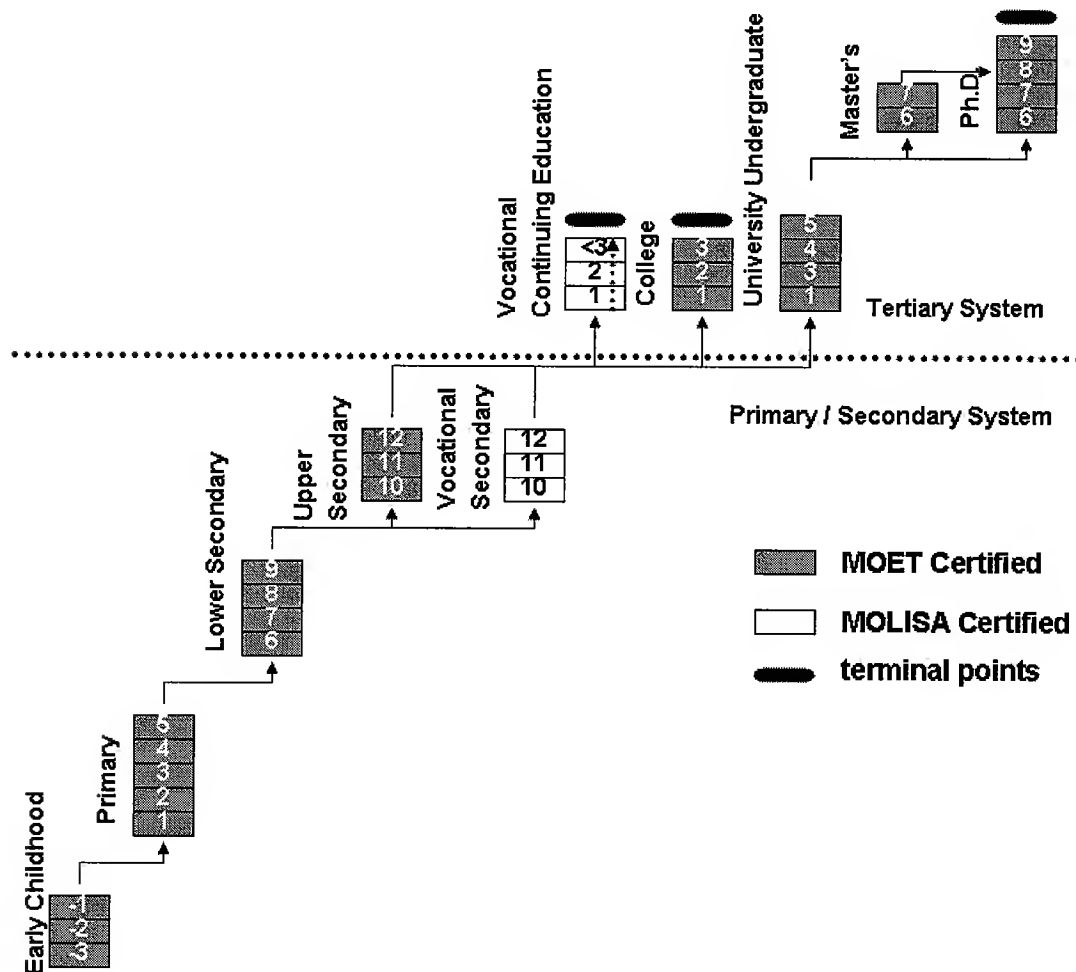


Figure 2. Vietnam's education and training system

There were two notable developments in the skills training sector since the implementation of the *doi moi* reforms. First, in the late 1980s, secondary vocational schools began to offer post secondary vocational continuing education programs (as per Figure 2). These programs do not exceed three years and are typically six months to two years in duration (World Bank, 1997). According to Porter (1993) the implementation of post-secondary vocational programming was a logical response to the decline of SOE employment. The limited skills developed at the secondary level results in graduates unable to secure private sector employment or viable self employment in a very competitive labour market. Vocational continuing education within this new private sector employment and self employment environment was supposed to provide the necessary advanced skills required in the deregulated skills labour market.

In the second *doi moi* reform to date in the education and training sector, the “community college” system was established across Vietnam in the mid 1990s. The nine community colleges currently in Vietnam varied considerably in terms of their mandates and operation. While the programming varied by institution, the community colleges offered programs by geographic area – not by economic or employment sector (e.g., industry, transportation, health, etc.). They offer three year diplomas, but also offer degrees through brokering with allied universities. Some community colleges also offer vocational continuing education as well. However, as per Figure 2, there is no articulation between vocational continuing, college and university level programming. A graduate of vocational continuing education receives no credit towards higher vocational, college or university certification. Likewise, college graduates receive no credit towards

a university degree. These terminal points at the completion of vocational continuing and college programs are therefore a grave disincentive for graduates to continue their education and training.

The evolution to date of the skills training system is symptomatic of the new demands on tertiary education and training institutions since the collapse of the SOE based employment system. As noted by Soltys (1997) under the Soviet model of vocational and technical training, only basic skills are taught at a secondary level and advanced training is provided through on-the-job programming. While the private sector has supplanted the SOE sector as the prime source of employment in Vietnam, private employers are reticent to assume the SOE's former role and provide the investment required for in-service training. As discussed by Patrinos and Linden (2003), due to labour mobility in the market economy, individual private employers are much less likely to recover staff training investment. This is particularly true in Vietnam where there is growing competition among employers for human resources with skills not readily available from public education institutions. As further noted by Patrinos and Linden, in market oriented systems should require the individual and/or the public sector to assume a cost burden proportional to the prolonged private or public benefit of higher skills training. Individual financial costs need to be rewarded through greater employment or self employment opportunities and/or higher salaries. Likewise, public investment higher skills training ought to improve public financial benefits through increased taxation revenue. However, currently in Vietnam higher skills training relevant to the private labour market remains largely unavailable from the public sector education and training

institutions (World Bank, 1997). Given the lack of financial returns on public training institutions, the Government of Vietnam is turning increasingly to the promotion of private investment in this sector through the establishment of “non public” colleges and universities (Vietnam News, 2005).

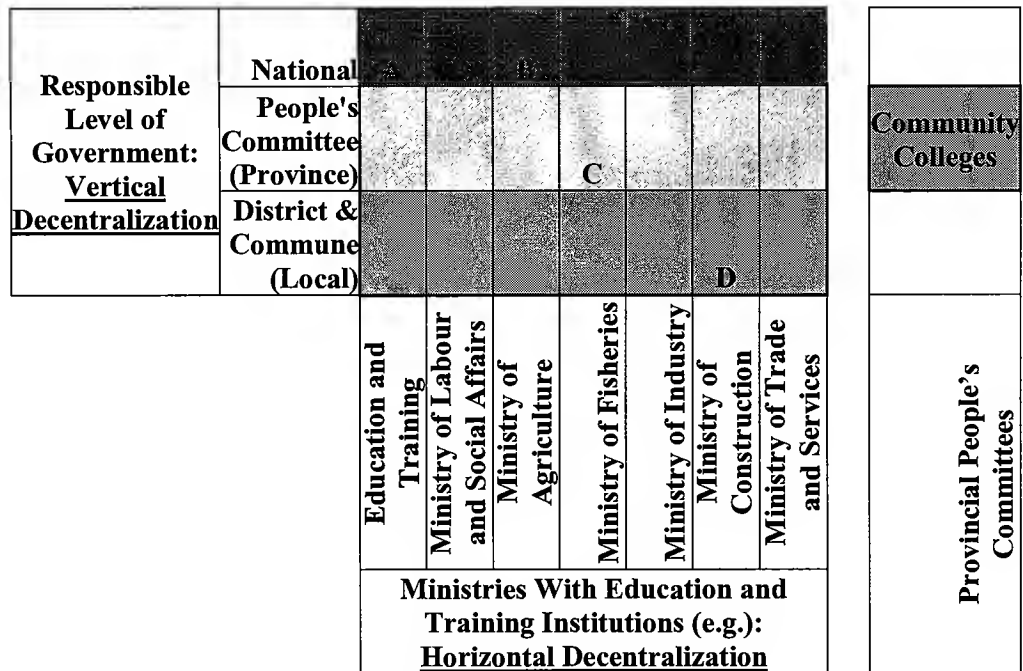


Figure 3. Decentralized Institution Administration

As shown in *Figure 3 Decentralized Institution Administration*, the government's current approach to managing the tertiary system is one of both *vertical* and *horizontal* decentralization. This leads to a confusing matrix of overlapping institutional responsibilities. Unlike typical international systems, the Vietnamese government's management role in the post-secondary system is not centralized within MOET. The system is *horizontally decentralized* in that there are many government ministries and departments responsible for funding and administering the skills training system. Any

given university, college or vocational school is funded and administered by a national level ministry, a provincial government (People's Committee), or local district level government. Reflective of the system's SOE employment focus and its "horizontal decentralization", over twenty government ministries are directly involved in the post-secondary education and training. Those involved include the various "line" ministries such as the ministries of agriculture (e.g. School "B"), fisheries (e.g. School "C"), and construction (School "D"), that effectively own and operate the schools as an ongoing source of skilled labour. The system is "vertically decentralized" in that all schools report to various levels of the government's hierarchy. The various overlapping levels are responsible for coordinating delivery among the "line" ministries at the commune (village), district (e.g. School "D"), provincial (e.g. School "C") and national levels (e.g. School "A" and School "B"). Given the lack of a single coordinating agency within any single geographic area, the result has been a tremendous over supply of schools offering similar programs and reporting to various ministries at various level of government (World Bank, 1997).

Community Colleges, being a relatively new type of institution, report not to a "line" ministry but to their respective provincial government. Likewise they are funded by the provincial government. Therefore, as in Figure 3 ("Community Colleges"), the administration is centralized at the provincial level. Community colleges are responsible for the delivery of education and training services across sectors throughout the province. As with other schools, MOET retains responsible for training program quality control and initially approves all new tertiary institutions.

National skill standards are determined and monitored by two ministries. As shown in Figure 3, MOET certifies all college (three year) and university (four year plus) programs while the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) certifies the skills training at the secondary and post secondary (less than three year) levels. MOET and MOLISA are responsible for program quality control. The two ministries must approve the initial delivery of all new programs, establish program student intake quotas, and compel the national standard (yet very broad) program curricula. While MOET and MOLISA conduct the initial approval process they have very limited monitoring capacity and on-going evaluation of most institutions is not generally done.

Challenges for Skills Training in Vietnam

The challenges related to the skills training system in Vietnam are interwoven with the ongoing political and economic issues facing the *doi moi* reforms. First, training provided by public institutions needs to be much more relevant to private sector employment and self-employment. Second, programs need to be better articulated to facilitate lifelong learning. For example, currently a college graduate with a three year associate degree that wishes to get a university degree typically must start from the very beginning of the university program. Without credit transfer or recognition of prior learning (i.e., program articulation), potential learners are needlessly deterred from investing in their own education and training. Articulation is necessary among and between the vocational, college and university levels. Third, the horizontal decentralized management approach to tertiary institutions is not cost effective. Many schools reporting to different ministries are duplicating functions within the same geographic

area. Finally non-governmental stakeholders need to be integrated with institutional governance. Institutions are currently only responsible to the government and communist party. Policy makers need to integrate non-governmental stakeholders, particularly employers, but in a fashion that does not threaten the primacy of the government or communist party. This reform presented, understood and implemented appropriately would demonstrate that it is in both public and private stakeholders' long-term benefit to incorporate non-governmental interests within institutional governance.

Chapter Summary

Vietnam has a long and proud history. In particular, the colonial wars and reunification of the country in 1975 left an understandable impression on the culture and psychology of the Vietnamese people. The near complete economic collapse in the 1980s provoked a thorough re-evaluation the economic assumptions of the ruling Communist Party which resulted in the development of the doi moi policy in 1986. The government endorsed the development of a market economy but under the strict political monopoly of the communist party. Economically, the doi moi policy was a tremendous success. However, continuing economic prosperity is threatened by an intransigent bureaucracy that is unable and/or unwilling to implement widespread public sector reform. Education and training is a good example of a public service sector in dire need to reform. The education and training system remains relatively unchanged from the time of the state controlled economy. The education and training system is managed by too many ministries and levels of government. Likewise, learners need institutions that are willing to adjust to programming to meet the needs of local and regional labour markets.

If public sector reform is not successful in the education sector, a growing number of unemployed youth and a less competitive private sector could form a serious threat to social and political stability in Vietnam.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF LEGISLATION AND CASE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to recommend policy changes that would enhance Vietnamese community colleges related to lifelong learning, governance, and program relevance. The basis for the policy recommendations discussed in Chapter Six is data collected from the VCCCP case study and three key pieces of legislation in Vietnam: *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998), the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004), and the *Decision of the minister of education and training: Promulgation of the provisional regulation of community college* (MOET, 2002). The data collection process utilized the case study and articles in the legislation related specifically to the study's sub-question topics of lifelong learning, institutional governance and program relevance. Clauses¹ of the three key pieces of legislation and the case study practices relevant to the sub-questions are discussed and examined against exemplary policy models as portrayed in Chapter Two Review of the Literature. The discussion of current policy versus exemplary policy serves as the foundation for the study's policy recommendations.

Current and Draft Education Laws

The law currently governing education in Vietnam is the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998). However, parliamentary debate led to the development of the *11th*

¹ Legislation quote references are by article numbers not page number. Original documents were translated so the article numbers are the more appropriate and valid reference.

draft education law (National Assembly, 2004) that was expected to pass in to law by June 2005. Although neither the current nor draft legislation is published in English, with MOET's permission in September 2004, the researcher was provided copies in the Vietnamese language of the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) and the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) which formed the basis for the final legislation to be approved in June 2005. The comparison between the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) and the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) provided the following discussion related to the study's sub-questions.

Lifelong Learning

By comparing and contrasting the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) and the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004), the conceptual influence of lifelong learning and the global knowledge economy on education and skills training policy in Vietnam was evident in numerous clauses. For example, the emphasis on critical thinking and self directed learning was evident in *Article 4 - Requirements in educational contents and methodologies* of both the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) and the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004). This clause acknowledged the importance of “creative thinking of the learners” and the need to “foster [students’] capacity of self-teaching” (Article 4). Acknowledging the role of technology in the global knowledge economy, *Article 4 – Requirements in educational content and methodologies* of the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) furthermore proposed a change to the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) that provided new encouragement for the “usage of teaching aid equipment and information

technology to improve the quality and effectiveness of education” (Article 4).

Recognizing the need for continual learning throughout a persons’ life, the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) proposed a significant lifelong learning amendment to *Article 9 – The educational rights and obligations of citizens*. This article noted that “learning is the right and obligation of citizens” (Article 9). Furthermore, in the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) *Article 11 Socialization of educational work*, the government was newly mandated to “closely coordinate schools in achieving education goals, provide education to every citizen, and build a healthy educational environment and *learning society*” [italics added] (Article 11). This demonstrated a new understanding on behalf of policy makers on the importance of facilitating formal learning regardless of age.

A less ambiguous acknowledgement of the importance of program articulation was noted in *Article 4 – Requirements in educational content and methodologies* of the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) which promoted the more “harmonious articulation among different training grades and educational types” (Article 4). Articulation between programming levels allows adult learners with tertiary education certification and/or work experience to more easily improve their academic credentials. For example, in a typical articulation process, a college graduate would receive up to three years credit towards a four year degree. Under an unarticulated system, as it is now in Vietnam, a college graduate has reached the first terminal point in the system (see Figure 2 on page 57). That is, there are no further programming options available that build upon the college level credentials. College graduates must

commence university programs at the very beginning because their tertiary academic credit at the college level was not recognized by universities. Recognizing that these terminal points (i.e., points where articulation is not possible) served as unnecessary disincentives to continued adult learning, the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) therefore clearly promoted (but did not compel) articulation among programming levels.

The second terminal point in Figure 2 (see page 57) was located upon the completion of post secondary vocational training. Without articulation to college or university level programming, post-secondary vocational graduates received no credit towards higher certification. This issue was discussed under the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) *Article 6 – The national education system*. This article recognized a need for the government to foster training at college, university and “continuing education types” of institutions (Article 6). Significantly, *Article 6 – The national education system* in the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) specifically acknowledged vocational education at the “post-secondary (diploma) levels” in the education and training system (Article 6). The acknowledgement was important because, in 1994, MOLISA assumed authority over post secondary vocational training from MOET. Since that time, MOET had refused to recognize in legislation the post-secondary vocational credentials (issued by MOLISA) for the purposes of articulating to college and university programming levels. This legal recognition of post-secondary vocational training programming demonstrated an important first step in developing an

integrated post secondary lifelong learning path that spans from vocational training to post graduate university credentials.

The recognition of both MOET and MOLISA certification was made explicit in the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) *Article 7 – Diplomas, certificates and degree*. The “certificate of post-secondary training” awarded to post-secondary vocational graduates by MOLISA was legally recognized within the overall education and training system (Article 7). However, it is important to note that while the legislation put a greater emphasis on the need for programming articulation, neither the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) nor the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) obligated MOET and MOLISA to articulate programs at the various certification levels.

The *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) proposed a complete change to *Section 3 Job Education* from the current *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998). For the first time, college level education and training was defined within the scope “job education” (Article 28). The Draft Education Law (2004) *Article 28 – Job education* stated:

College level is trained with a duration of three years served to learners who hold Upper Secondary Education Certificate; and trained with duration of 1.5 – 2 years for learners who complete and hold the Certificate of Technical Education of short and long-term training of similar trades, with proven [practical] working experience. (Article 28)

Significantly, this clause proposed shorter duration (*i.e.*, one and one-half to two years) for college learners that possessed post secondary vocational credentials and related working experience as opposed to students entering from secondary schools (*i.e.* , requiring three years). Articulation of vocational credentials and recognition of prior learning was an important milestone in developing a lifelong learning model that facilitated constant opportunities for post secondary vocational graduates to upgrade their credentials to the college level. Under the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) college level training was exclusively three years in duration and there was no articulation of vocational certification to the college level. Under *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) the certification earned at the post-secondary vocational level could contribute to the completion of college level credentials.

What was called “non formal education” in the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) was renamed in Section 5 of the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) to “continuing education” (Article 40). *Article 40 - Continuing Education* in the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) defined continuing education as:

the form of education to help people work and learn at the same time and to learn continually all the lifelong aimed at perfecting their personality, broadening their knowledge, elevating their cultural specialization and professional standard in order to improve living standards, to find a job and adapt to social life. (Article 40)

The changed name for this type of training was important because the new legislation, for the first time, apparently recognized that learning needs to be formally recognized within the education and skills training system. This formal recognition supported graduates in their efforts to accumulate academic credentials that, in turn, facilitated higher levels of employment achievement. Also noteworthy in *Article 40 - Continuing Education* in the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) was the explicit recognition of continuing education learners as “people [who] work and learn at the same time” (Article 40). A clear implication of this recognition, for example, was the understanding that traditional daytime delivery methods obviously did not suit continuous learners so program design and delivery must be more flexible to address these learners’ demands. Furthermore, in both the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) and the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004), *Article 41 – Requirements for content and method of continuing education* there was an emphasis upon addressing the practical needs of learners in order to “raise their labour and production capacity and as well as improve the living standards” (Article 41). Likewise continuing education should “exploit experiences of learners and place importance to fostering his/her self-teaching capacity” (Article 41). Therefore, the legislation recognized some of the inherent characteristics of adult learners (see Chapter Two). Although the legislation did not specify processes that would achieve the stated lifelong learning policy objectives, the clause nonetheless did encourage institutions to recognize adult prior learning as well as implement more learner-directed programming.

Governance

Article 13 – State management of education demonstrated one of the most substantial changes between the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) and the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) related to institutional governance. Under the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004), the state will “implement decentralization of management to local agencies and enhance autonomy and self-responsibility of grassroots education establishments” (Article 13). The recent emphasis on decentralization matched well with the global trend for decentralized governance (see Chapter Four). The specifics of how this governance decentralization process worked was not described in either the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) and the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004). However, given the endorsement of decentralization within both the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) and the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) separate legislation was expected specific to the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, such as the *Decision of the minister of education and training: Promulgation of the provisional regulation of community college* (Ministry of Education and Training, 2002) discussed later in Chapter Five, should detail the various processes for establishing decentralized governance at these different levels of the education and training system. Nonetheless, the decentralization endorsement indicated the need to significantly change institutional governance because, for the first time, there was a recognized need among central policy makers for more meaningful local accountability for education and training institutions.

The *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004), *Article 50 – Advisory Council at School*, establishes “advisory councils” for all primary, secondary and tertiary institution in the education and training system (Article 50). While the roles of these councils varied by the statute establishing each institution, the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004), *Article 84a Education Council* noted that a key responsibility would be “to raise investments from all sources in the society” and “to develop a learning society” (Article 84a). This was further evidence of the decentralization trend in Vietnam with local stakeholders taking on greater decision making and investment responsibilities. The composition of the Education Council was not clear with one exception. The councils would be led by the “Chairpersons of the People’s Committee (local and provincial governments)” and/or local communist party cadres (Article 84a). The legislation did not specify if, or how, non government and non communist party stakeholders would participate in local institutional governance. The role of the advisory councils at community colleges is discussed more fully in the next section of Chapter Five.

The *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004), *Article 55 – Autonomy and self-responsibility of technical training, vocational and professional secondary schools, college and universities*, granted primary, secondary and tertiary institutions “autonomy and self-responsibility as prescribed by law” (Article 55). Therefore, the level of independence enjoyed by each type of school could vary significantly under the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004). However, it is important to note that all schools were given the explicit new right under *Article 55 – Autonomy and self-*

responsibility of technical training, vocational and professional secondary schools, college and universities to recruit and hire their own faculty and staff. Also, under *Article 54 – Rights and obligations of technical vocational secondary schools, colleges and universities in science research and social service*, these institutions had the explicit right to invest revenues the institutions generated themselves from “economic activities” such as tuition from continuing education programs (Article 54). Therefore, although the level of autonomy varied by school type, there was a broad-based trend to increase schools’ decision making and reduce from the central government bureaucracy. However, despite the greater emphasis on site based management, the professional development implications for local administrators and faculty were not acknowledged in either the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) or the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004). While decentralizing authority, central governments should also state in legislation the need to build professional capacity of administrators and faculty charged with a multitude of newfound decision making responsibilities. Without the explicit commitment to professional development inherently required by the legislation, the decentralization process risks failure from a lack of local management capacity.

The *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) proposed significant amendments from the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) regarding the central government’s role in managing the education system. The *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) *Article 86 – Content of state management of education* noted a new requirement of government to “collect and categorize data relating to organization

and activities of education” (Article 86). This was an important first indication that the central government’s role evolved from a day-to-day administrator to a periodic evaluator of institutional outcomes in a decentralized management system. The legislation did not specify the specific outcomes to be reported. A stronger indication of the government’s seriousness in reporting by outcomes would have been if the list of reporting criteria was included and the reporting process specifically obliged by the legislation.

Program Relevance

Article 8 – Educational development in both the *Education law* (National Assembly, 1998) and the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) affirmed that “educational development must be linked to the needs of socio-economic development” (Article 8). Furthermore, noted in the same clause, the education and training system needed to ensure “quality and efficiency and combining training with employment” (Article 8). Integrating a new concept in *Article 8 – Educational development*, the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) also noted the importance of implementing “standardization” in the education system (Article 8). Presumably, the purpose of the “standardization” was to promote greater academic and labour mobility throughout the country (Article 8).

In the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004), *Article 29 – Objective of job education* states:

The objective of job education is to train working people with knowledge and professional know-how of different levels; good ethics, professional conscience, the sense of discipline, an industrial style, good health with a

view to *creating conditions for the working people to have the capacity to find a job and meeting the needs of socio-economic development* [italics added]. (Article 29)

Therefore, while job education had a variety of moral and physical education objectives, the key output was graduate employment and self employment. Furthermore, the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) *Article 30 Requirements for contents of job education* recognized that education and training programs needed to not only provide the skills related to graduates' initial employment and self-employment opportunities, "but also develop *themselves* at their working fields" [italics added] (Article 30). Thus, as per the principles of the global knowledge economy and lifelong learning, the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) recognized the learner's own responsibilities for self-directed learning throughout his or her life that is relevant to employment and self-employment opportunities in their respective communities.

Regulation of Community Colleges

Decision of the minister of education and training: Promulgation of the provisional regulation of community college (MOET, 2002) was decreed on August 8, 2002. The decision was an amendment to the original decree of March 30, 1994 that legally established community colleges in Vietnam.

Lifelong Learning

Article 2 – Education objectives, noted that community colleges had broad responsibilities for developing students' "professional skills of post-secondary and college level" (Article 2). This placed community colleges in a unique position of having

the legal authority to deliver both post-secondary vocational training (certified by MOLISA) and college level programming (certified by MOET). This offered an extraordinary opportunity for articulation between these programming levels. In addition, *Article 18 – Training programs and subjects*, explicitly encouraged community colleges to develop an “articulation plan to enable college graduates to pursue higher education at universities” (Article 18). MOET would approve such articulation plans on an ad hoc basis. Nevertheless, the *Decision of the minister of education and training: Promulgation of the provisional regulation of community college* (MOET, 2002) marked a significant change in policy where articulation of programming between vocational, college and university levels are either implicitly or explicitly encouraged by MOET. However, while program articulation was encouraged, legislation did not compel any tertiary institution to recognize other schools’ academic credentials at the post secondary vocation, college and university levels.

Governance

The preamble of the *Decision of the minister of education and training: Promulgation of the provisional regulation of community college* (MOET, 2002) noted that the Chairperson of the local provincial People’s Committee (i.e., provincial governments) was chiefly responsible for implementing the Decision together with the MOET head of Higher Education and the individual community college Rectors. Likewise, *Article 1 – Status of community colleges* noted that the community colleges “shall be invested by the local government” (Article 1). This point was reinforced in *Article 4 – Authority for establishment and decentralization of management of community*

colleges which clearly stated that community colleges will be established under the authorization of the central government but will thereafter be “subject to the management of [the] provincial People’s Committee” (Article 4). Therefore, unlike other colleges and universities which are coordinated by various sector ministries (e.g., industry, agriculture, etc.) in cooperation with MOET, community colleges were funded and coordinated by provincial governments alone. This permitted the provincial government to avoid duplication of services by centrally managing the supply of all community college education and training programs across all sectors within the province. The duplication of programming was a fundamental challenge to the education and training system because numerous schools reporting to different ministries were delivering very similar programming within the same geographic area. Control of the community college by the provincial People’s Committee meant that the programming oversupply within a province could be regulated by the provincial People’s Committee. *Article 1 – Status of community colleges* was a significant indication that community colleges would be responsible for addressing all adult training needs in a geographic area regardless of sector (i.e., industry, transportation, health, etc.).

Within *Article 1 Status of community colleges*, it was noted that “the community college holds legal status with its own seal and bank account” (Article 1). Community colleges were noted as organizations distinct from the government. Employees of community colleges were not government employees and the community college’s property was to be registered under the name of the community college. The Chairperson of the provincial People’s Committee was responsible for the hiring and firing of the

community college Rector as per *Article 6 – The Rector*. The Chairperson, on behalf of the People’s Committee, also approved community college annual budgeting plans submitted by the Rector. The community college budget was financed from provincial revenues.

Article 9 – Training & Science Council noted that this body shall provide advice to the Rector. This advisory council consisted of the Vice Rectors as well as institutional faculty and staff. *Article 9 – Training & Science Council* also noted that external stakeholders were represented by “prestigious lecturers and scientists within and outside the college” (Article 9). In the same clause, “business managers” were included on the advisory council but their role on the council was not clearly articulated (Article 9). However, the majority of the designated positions on the council were internal to the community college and other academic communities. The council meetings were to be only twice per year but the Rector did have the authority to call “extraordinary” meetings as required (Article 9). Although the representation of external stakeholders, particularly employers, on the Training and Science Council was minimal, *Article 9 – Training & Science Council* did permit the Rector wide authority to establish “other consulting councils” as deemed necessary (Article 9).

Article 19 – Forms of Training authorized community colleges to provide both formal and non-formal training programs. Community colleges were to provide an important link for lifelong learners. Non-formal education, or continuing education which it was renamed by MOET under the 11th draft education law (National Assembly, 2004), was to be provided to learners on an ad hoc basis as deemed necessary by local

decision makers without regulation by central authorities. However, as per *Article 3 Obligations and rights*, community colleges as part of the formal training system were also uniquely able to certify non formal learners for post-secondary vocational certificates or college diplomas. Adult learners could take a series of non formal short courses over a long period of time, and when all the required competencies were met, the community college was able to award the corresponding post secondary vocational certificate or college diploma. All other formal learning institutions in Vietnam required students to meet strict entrance requirements and obliged students to complete their programs within strict timelines.

Program Relevance

The legal mandate of community colleges was defined in *Article 2 – Community colleges* as the following:

The main objectives of community colleges are to provide students with good political and moral knowledge for the development of the community; knowledge and professional skills of post-secondary and college level, and physical strength to enable them to improve knowledge and professional skills and *secure employment or self-employment opportunities in response to the requirements of socio-economic development*, and securities in the community. [italics added] (Article 2)

As a result, community colleges had a clear mandate to provide a variety of “post secondary and college level programs” that prepared graduates for “employment or self employment opportunities” (Article 2). Enjoying the clear mandate of a typical

employment and self-employment focused tertiary TVET institution, community colleges in Vietnam were thus able to easily measure their success through the reported employment and self-employment rates of the colleges' post secondary vocational and college level programming.

Under *Article 3 - Obligations and rights*, community colleges have the authority to develop their own curricula and learning resources "based upon the program outline promulgated by the Ministry of Education and Training" (Article 3). Therefore, MOET was responsible, on a country-wide basis, to determine broad training program competency standards. These national standards fostered labour mobility by ensuring graduates of similar programs throughout Vietnam all had the same approximate skill sets and could therefore work anywhere in the country. However, most significantly, *Article 3 - Obligations and rights* encouraged individual community colleges to take responsibility for developing their own curricula and learning resources relevant to the needs of community colleges' students and the labour market demands of local and regional employers.

Article 21 – Scientific Research & Development stated that "Community colleges are entitled to provide science and technology transfer services, and engage in business and production relating to their training industries to promote education and employment and increase the budget for the colleges" (Article 21). Community colleges were encouraged to develop strong links with business and employers. Furthermore, a revenue generation capacity based upon the community colleges' capacity to provide training services relevant to the labour market was promoted. However, critical stakeholders

external to the community college, such as private enterprises and other employers, had no officially specified responsibilities in any community college management board or council. Given the private sectors' traditional and mutual antipathy towards government and its agencies, a sanction of private sector employers' advisory roles in community colleges' programming would have been invaluable to ensuring institutional relevance to local and regional labour markets.

Article 31 – Relationship among colleges, local authorities, R & D establishments, and businesses states that “community colleges shall be responsible for coordinating with local authorities and businesses in surveying and determining the training needs, forging linkages between training and employment, building onsite training environment for students” (Article 31). Therefore, the community colleges were required to conduct labour market surveys and to “forge linkage” with employers through an unspecified process (Article 31). Notably absent, however, was any requirement to report on the outcomes related to the labour market. For example, reporting on graduate employment and self employment levels was not required by the decision. Outcome based reporting requirements could be far more instrumental than encouraging legislation in demonstrating that this linkage with the labour market was meaningfully developed and sustained.

VCCCP Case Study

The VCCCP began in February 2001 as a five year project with CDN\$7.7 million funding provided by CIDA on behalf of the Government of Canada and with in-kind contributions provided by the Tra Vinh People's Committee (TVPC), Can Tho University

(CTU), the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and a consortium of Canadian community colleges led by the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST). The purpose of the project was to establish the Tra Vinh Community College (TVCC) in Tra Vinh province, approximately 200 kilometers in the Mekong Delta southeast of Ho Chi Minh City. The province is one of the poorest in Vietnam with an economy dependent upon rice farming, but with an emerging aquaculture production capacity and a small, but growing, industrial capacity. The project was especially significant in that it was anticipated that if the TVCC was successful, it could serve as a model for all community colleges in Vietnam. At the time of project commencement, community colleges were seen as distinct tertiary TVET institutions that were distinguished by three broad factors. First, community colleges were multi-sectoral (i.e., industry, agriculture, health, etc.) and, unlike many sector based TVET institutions in Vietnam, served all the adult education and training needs in a specific geographic area. Second, community colleges were to be accessible to all adults regardless of academic background or location in the community college's geographic area of responsibility. Third, programming at community colleges was supposed to be relevant to the labour market needs of local and regional employers.

The resources from the VCCCP provided a unique opportunity to experiment in the policy framework regulating community colleges in Vietnam. The Canadian expertise provided within the VCCCP facilitated the development and implementation of new management and instructional practices unique to the TVCC, such as established Program Advisory Committees (PACs) and ongoing instructor professional development

programming. Furthermore, given the TVCC's recognized experimental nature, MOET and other regulatory authorities offered extraordinary regulatory flexibility in order to pilot and evaluate new community college practices. The rationale and description of the novel approaches adopted by the VCCCP were described in the TVCC Strategic Plan (Tra Vinh Community College, 2003). The TVCC Strategic Plan (Tra Vinh Community College) discussed the challenges faced by the newly emergent TVCC, the approach and activities prescribed to address these issues, and the subsequent evaluation provided a basis for the recommendations in Chapter Six.

Lifelong Learning

From the VCCCP's inception in 2001, it was widely assumed that the TVCC (like the eight other Vietnamese community colleges) would focus exclusively on delivering three year college diploma programs. However, the initial labour market analysis conducted in Tra Vinh province October 2002 noted that local and regional employment and self-employment training demand was inversely proportional to credential level and training duration. That is, the higher the training credential (i.e., vocational, college diploma, university degree, etc.) and the longer the training duration, the less demand existed. For example, very little employment or self employment for college level graduates was available locally in Tra Vinh province or regionally in the Mekong Delta. Conversely, short vocational programs related to agriculture or aquaculture production or post-harvest value added processing had tremendous demand. The strong demand for short vocational programming was the result of three interrelated factors. First, the practical nature of the vocational programming related better than college level

programming to the day-to-day needs to improve income generation among the small scale self employed farmers that dominated the labour market in rural provinces like Tra Vinh. Second, higher credentialed learning programs had relatively stringent academic pre-requisites that most potential learners in rural Vietnam did not possess. Third, short training durations meant less lost income from participation in training programs. However, notwithstanding the pervasive labour market demand for vocational training, new Vietnamese and Canadian public investment for the institution was successfully attracted, in part, because the project was to result in the delivery of college level programs for the first time in Tra Vinh province. A conflict quickly emerged between labour market demands and the political need for the new institution to achieve the college level of academic prestige.

In response to the need for both market relevance and academic status, the TVCC developed an innovative model for program articulation between post-secondary vocational and college level programs. Students entering a typical program at the TVCC exited with a post-secondary vocational certificate at six months, one year or two years of training. Furthermore post-secondary vocational two year graduates had the option of completing another eighteen month program to be awarded with a three year college diploma. Furthermore, students were offered unprecedented flexibility to enter and exit formal post-secondary vocational programs. For example, students could graduate at six months and enter the labour market. Later in the graduate's career, should he or she require greater certification for higher level vocations, the TVCC would facilitate program re-entry at a later date and minimize the time required to achieve higher

vocational or college level certification. Officially approved by MOET as a pilot program in March 2005, this articulation model allowed the TVCC to focus on providing short post secondary vocational skills training programs to respond to the local and regional labour markets while concurrently offering students the option of completing college level certification. Furthermore, the TVCC completed agreements with Long Nam University in Ho Chi Minh City that facilitated articulation between the TVCC college diploma and Long Nam University degree programs in agriculture, aquaculture and post harvest technologies. Therefore, unlike other Vietnamese education and training institutions, the TVCC offered its students many articulated certification options from short term vocational certificates to university graduate and post graduate degrees.

In November 2004, the TVCC opened four satellite training centres in rural districts of Tra Vinh province. Short modularized vocational programs were delivered to rural students using an approach adopted specifically for non-traditional adult learners. Adults of various academic backgrounds were able to enroll in short programs that focused on immediate practical benefits to the learner. Instructional methods recognized learners' prior knowledge and the evaluation processes focused on skill demonstration, not the rote memorization typical of schools in Vietnam. In addition, using the TVCC articulation model, learning was certified and credit was accumulated towards post-secondary vocational or college programs. Therefore, the convenient geographic locations, the short course durations, the instructional approach customized for adults, the academic credit provided, and the immediate practical benefits of the training all contributed to motivate the non-traditional adult learner in rural Tra Vinh.

The satellite centres were particularly important to rural women and the Khmer ethnic minority that, as noted in the TVCC Strategic Plan (Tra Vinh Community College, 2003), comprised approximately 30% of the population in Tra Vinh, one of the highest concentration in Vietnam. Rural Khmer learners often faced linguistic and/or cultural barriers to skills training and rural females were less able to migrate to larger centers to pursue learning opportunities. Thus, the TVCC satellite centres were an extraordinary opportunity for lifelong learning in rural Vietnam.

Governance

Governance proved a fundamental challenge to developing the TVCC as an effective community college in Vietnam. While authority was decentralized from the national government, the Chairperson of the provincial People's Committee solely assumed much of the former central government responsibility. However, for community college programming to reflect the needs of the communities they served, key stakeholders need a meaningful influence on how the institution was managed and the programming it delivered. The legislation for community colleges did permit (in the form of the Training & Science Council) outside stakeholders to provide the Rector non-binding advice. However, as demonstrated within the VCCCP, the Training & Science Council alone was insufficient in addressing the community colleges' governance issues for two reasons. First, the role of employers and community leaders on the council was very ambiguous. Policy makers and institutional managers commonly understood that this council was for fellow academics and other prominent scientists. Business participation was very limited if present at all. Secondly, while the Training & Science

Council provided advice to the Rector, it was the Chairperson of the People's Committee who hired and fired the Rector. Therefore, even if appropriate community stakeholder representation was appointed to the Training & Science Council, it is unclear how the Rector would be accountable to this body when the authority to hire and fire rested with the People's Committee Chairperson.

The TVCC developed two important innovative practices related to governance of community colleges. First, consisting of employers and potential employers of TVCC graduates, a Program Advisory Committee (PAC) was established for each training program at the TVCC. The PACs provided recommendations for necessary program changes and advised on new competency requirements for entry level employment in their respective workplaces. Furthermore, the PAC provided for a formal avenue of communication and cooperation between employers and the TVCC. Second, the TVCC established an "Advisory Council" consisting of the TVCC Rector, government and employer (private and state) stakeholders. Most significantly, the Advisory Council was chaired by People's Committee Chairperson. As its name implied, the council only advised the Rector and the People's Committee Chairperson. However, the dialogue between the institution and its key community stakeholders within the scope of the Advisory Council served to advise both the People's Committee Chairperson and the Rector. Thus, through informal processes at the Advisory Council level, community stakeholders were able to influence the key accountability relationship between the People's Committee Chairperson and the TVCC Rector. Most significantly, by remaining at the informal level and clearly mandating the governance role as advisory,

the Advisory Council was not perceived as a threat the political monopoly of the Communist Party.

Program Relevance

Programming relevance to the local and regional labour market is a vital part of the mandate for any community college. To ensure relevance to Tra Vinh province and the Mekong Delta region, the VCCCP assisted the TVCC to pilot three key initiatives. First, the TVCC was required to track performance indicators such as graduate employment/self-employment rates and employer/student satisfaction levels. The also segregated by student gender and ethnicity. The collected was incorporated in the TVCC strategic planning process and reported annually. Furthermore, the reported results of TVCC programming were incorporated into institutional management processes. For example, resources were allocated annually based upon programming strategies to address performance indicators. Institutional resources were allocated in a manner that demonstrated past improvement the in the selected outcome indicators. For an example, the greater than anticipated student employment and self employment results for short term post secondary vocational programming compared to college level programming has led TVCC management to direct more resources to the vocational programming level. As a result, the outcomes-based reporting has kept in check an institutional tendency to concentrate its resources at the highest academically prestigious levels regardless of community education and training demand. In addition, the data was segregated by gender and ethnicity thus identifying key outcomes for specially targeted groups for training and employment such as women and the Khmer population. While

the performance of the TVCC as demonstrated by these indicators did not have an official impact on institutional funding from the TVPC, the TVCC's capacity to reliably report on its tangible impact on the community in terms of employment and self employment was a powerful influence on government decision makers involved in the public sector budgeting process.

Second, through a competency based approach, the TVCC adopted a curricula development process where local and regional employers, not academics, determined training program learning outcomes. National curricula standards were adhered to and the TVCC program outlines were approved by MOET upon program initialization. However, national curricula standards were very broad, allowing for the development of more detailed TVCC curricula specific to local and regional need of the Tra Vinh and Mekong Delta labour market. Curricula with customized learning resources developed on site at the TVCC provided guidance to instructors to ensure learning remained centered on employer determined learning outcomes. Straightforward learning objectives also facilitated the use of customized learning guides and assessment tools. Demonstrating the success at the TVCC, in 2004 the community college's approach to competency based education and training was adopted by the Vietnamese civil service training institutions under a program funded by the Swiss Development Corporation.

Third, the TVCC invested heavily in its faculty's technical and instructional professional development. Almost all the TVCC faculty recruited were recent university graduates who had research skills but little or no practical experience. This presented a very acute challenge for the TVCC because employers clearly demanded TVCC

graduates to have extensive technical knowledge, practical skills and positive workplace attitudes. Significant resources were invested in the practical skill development of TVCC instructors based upon learning outcomes they were required to teach in the program curricula. TVCC faculty, as new university graduates, lacked instructional skills. Student centred instructional skills training programs were developed by selected TVCC instructors specially trained within the VCCCCP and delivered to all TVCC faculty. Furthermore, a continuing professional development process was developed to identify and address emerging faculty technical and instructional skill development needs on a continuing basis. Ironically, the TVCC faculty's lack of formative experience in a traditional Vietnamese institution, almost certainly eased the process of successfully inducting instructors into the radically different curricula development and instructional processes used at the TVCC.

Chapter Summary

The legislation related to education and training was clearly in agreement with lifelong learning, institutional governance and program relevance policy trends in as discussed in Chapter Two. There was an emphasis upon self directed learning programs and the enhanced development of creative thinking skills among learners in Vietnam. More importantly, for the purposes of this study, there was a new understanding that the global learning economy demanded formal learning opportunities be provided to everyone, not just children and young adults. The articulation of tertiary education programs at the vocational, college and university levels was an important idea within the legislation. The legislation recognized that community colleges played a pivotal role in

tertiary program articulation, especially between the vocational and college programming levels that were delivered in the colleges themselves. Given their dual vocational and college programming level mandate, community colleges were likewise recognized as uniquely placed to facilitate certification compatibility between MOET and MOLISA. The TVCC articulation model was successful in forging a functional credential link between vocational, college and university level programming. This unique model allowed the TVCC to remain focused upon vocational training while concurrently facilitating learners' access to college and university level programming.

Decentralizing institutional governance was a central theme of the legislation. The central government recognized the need to decentralize decision making but the level of independence at each school was not clearly defined by the legislation. Most significantly for community colleges, their mandate was clearly to provide education and training to adults across all sectors (i.e., industry, agriculture, health, etc.) in a given geographic region. This was a significant change from the previous situation where nominally sector based institutions simply duplicated training opportunities in any given geographic area. The legislation clearly made the provincial People's Committee responsible for rationalizing community college programming within their respective provinces. Various representative bodies such as the advisory councils were established by legislation but their meaningful role in institutional decision making was, again, unclear. Some participation from stakeholders outside the schools was possible, but the clear accountability remained directly to the government, albeit decentralized to the local provincial People's Committee. The TVCC, however, was able to integrate external

stakeholders within the institutional Advisory Council” and the Program Advisory Committees. These advisory boards played an important role in providing community input into the official reporting relationship between the TVPC Chairperson and TVCC Rector. While the advisory committees did not have official power to compel action from the TVPC or the TVCC, their informal role had a significant impact. Furthermore, it was deemed imperative that such external stakeholder roles remain informal to ensure the categorical avoidance of a perceived threat to the political monopoly of the Communist Party.

In terms of program relevance, the legislation clearly mandated education and training institutions (and community colleges in particular) to be relevant to local, regional and national labour markets. Broad national training standards were to be maintained but institutions did have independence to design programs particular to the needs of local labour markets within this overall national framework. While colleges were required to conduct labour market analyses and develop links with business in order to inform their program design and delivery, there was no requirement to report on critical outcomes such as the graduate employment and self employment levels. Conversely, the TVCC established an outcomes based reporting process as part of its Strategic Plan (2003). This process was vital in ensuring the relevancy of TVCC programming. Furthermore, this process informed TVCC management in regards to results based decision making in relation to resource allocation. Likewise, the outcomes based reporting served to strengthen the TVCC in relation to the public sector budgeting

process at TVPC because the TVCC was able to demonstrate the continuing economic and social impact of the community college.

CHAPTER SIX

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to recommend policy changes that would enhance Vietnamese community colleges related to lifelong learning, governance, and program relevance. The context of the current regulatory framework for community colleges is described in Chapter Five.

Introduction

Recommendations integrate exemplary policy aspects as outlined in Review of the Literature in Chapter Two. The recommendations consider political, economic and social factors within the Vietnamese policy environment as described in Chapter Four. Chapter Five discusses specific elements of current and draft legislation and the results of the TVCC case study that are relevant to the recommendations. The policy-oriented research approach, as described in Chapter Three, yields the future-oriented recommendations related to the study's three subtopics. A final recommendation suggests avenues of further study to promote a greater understanding of Vietnamese community colleges' rapidly evolving policy needs.

Current Vietnamese policy encourages, but does not require, community colleges to act in a manner that would improve their capacity to address adult learner needs. This study provides three recommendations in the areas of lifelong learning, governance and program relevancy outlining how MOET should provide specific policy stimuli for the development of more efficient and effective education and skills training services in

Vietnam. A final recommendation focuses on possible future policy studies related to Vietnamese community colleges.

Policy Recommendation for Lifelong Learning

Exemplary Concepts in the Literature

As noted by Seng and Hwee (1997), academic institutions tend to refuse to recognize academic credit for learning that occurred outside their own institution. This is because institutions are required to ensure that all their graduates meet the required academic standards. The easiest and simplest way to ensure standards are met is to insist that all students, regardless of their background, participate in the same learning and evaluation processes at the final credentialing institution. In this scenario, institutions are not required to research the academic standards or evaluation processes of other institutions nor are they required to assess new students' existing knowledge and skills for the purposes of providing advanced academic credit. However, for many adult learners, insisting on repeating the learning process translates to a tremendous and unnecessary opportunity cost. Many potential adult learners will subsequently opt out of opportunities to upgrade their credentials. Therefore, while recognizing valid concerns over academic standards, policy must set clear processes for program articulation. Furthermore, policy must compel institutions to adhere to a reasonable articulation process and help facilitate the achievement of continued learning credentials.

Policy Context

New legislation compelling articulation between post secondary vocational and college levels is inherently flawed. Currently, there is no requirement for institutions to

provide academic credit to post-secondary vocational graduates for transfer to college level programs. Nonetheless, *Article 28 – Job Education* of the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) would, if it passes, require institutions to provide post secondary vocational graduates between one and a half and two years credit towards a three year college diploma. However, the *11th draft education law* (National Assembly, 2004) *Article 28 Job education* further states that the obligation to provide this credit is required only for post secondary vocational graduates with “proven [practical] working experience.” Therefore, it remains ultimately within the institutions’ discretion whether or not to provide academic credit to post secondary vocational graduates entering college level programming.

Community colleges offer a unique opportunity for articulation between post secondary vocational and college level programming. A community college delivers both these programming levels within the institution. Therefore, the articulation process is facilitated because a community colleges is only required to assess itself, in a sense, and not the programming of another institution as would be the case in an inter-institutional transfer. The unknown quality control factors of other institutions’ programming (and hence risk) are removed when the community college is required to only assess its own post secondary vocational programming. Presumably, if possible, the community college would provide itself with a favorable evaluation and qualify its own vocational graduates for articulation towards a college level diploma. Therefore, after eliminating inter-institutional assessment concerns, policy can reasonably obligate

articulation between post secondary vocational and college levels but only within the same community college.

The articulation process between post secondary vocational and college level programming should not impact program content at either level. Currently post secondary vocational programs are certified by MOLISA, not MOET. However a change from the status quo is not required in order to implement this recommendation. To the contrary, by merging the post secondary vocational and college level programming to a single certification body there develops a risk of diluting the practical aspects of vocational training in an effort to accommodate college level credit transfer. It is post secondary vocational skills that are in greatest demand from the labour market, particularly in rural areas. Articulation to the college level should to be an option for vocational graduates, but the main purpose of the vocational credential is not college transfer but employment or self employment in the labour market. However, given the appropriate employment and self employment opportunities in the labour market, a functioning articulation process between the post secondary vocational and college certification levels, would produce larger numbers of adult learners that are able and willing to improve their credentials.

Recommendation #1

That MOET require all formal post secondary vocational training programs delivered by a community college to articulate towards the completion of related college level diploma programs delivered by the same community college.

Policy Recommendation for Governance

Exemplary Concepts in the Literature

The establishment of the Advisory Council is part of the evolutionary process within the education and training system from a bureaucratic centralist model to a decentralized governance paradigm that promotes more local decision making. This decentralization process is in accordance with general policy trends that are influenced by, as discussed by Patrinos and Linden (2003), the development of the global knowledge economy and, as discussed by Peters and Waterman (1982), the contemporary management philosophy that advocates “loose-tight” organizational principles and the delegation of decision making as much as possible to local authorities. However, legislation and policy related to community colleges still need to address the fundamental challenge of translating the perspectives of local nongovernmental stakeholders into influence on institutional governance. The influence of nongovernmental stakeholders at the institutional governance level is vital because, since the beginning of the *doi moi* reforms, the best opportunities for graduate employment and self employment are in the private sector. If the nongovernmental stakeholders do not make a continuing and substantial impact upon the community college, the institution will be unable to fulfill its mandate to prepare learners for employment and self-employment.

Policy Context

The recommendation is largely incorporated within the 11th draft education law (National Assembly, 2004) *Article 50 – Advisory Council at School*. However, significant by its absence, the composition of the Advisory Council is not specified.

Historically, many of these academic advisory boards almost exclusively consisted of members from other government departments or academic institutions. Obviously, the participation from stakeholders internal to the community college is important. Key positions such as the community college rector should be made ex officio to the Advisory Council. However, in order for community college Advisory Councils to reflect their key stakeholders, at least half of the membership should be reserved for external nongovernmental stakeholders representative of the local and regional communities. Official consultation and cooperation with nongovernmental stakeholders at a governance level is not a common practice in Vietnam. Therefore, the emphasis on nongovernmental membership needs to be obligatory and explicit in policy and/or legislation. Nevertheless, it needs to be absolutely clear that none of the advice from the council is binding upon the institution or the provincial People's Committee. The Communist Party's political monopoly must be acknowledged and the purpose of the Advisory Council is not to set up another decision making body parallel to the provincial People's Committee. The provincial People's Committee will make the final management decisions regarding their respective community colleges. However, decision makers would be wise to consider the advice of all stakeholders in the management process.

Recommendation #2

That MOET require every community college to establish an "Advisory Council" with membership that is representative of the local and regional communities and presided over by the Chairperson of the relevant provincial People's Committee.

Recommendation for Program Relevance

Exemplary Concepts in the Literature

As argued by Patton (1982), a measurable evaluative framework is necessary in all policy. A policy's intended and unintended consequences must be measured and assessed in order to guide future policy development. Therefore, a policy is incomplete without this practical evaluation component.

As noted by Greaney and Kellaghan (1996), an outcomes evaluation models serves a dual purpose for education and training policy. First, the model permits decision making decentralization to local authorities because accountability is maintained through an outcomes based evaluation and not based upon assessing compliance of central government directives. Second, the outcomes based models helps to ensure institutional programming remains relevant to student's education and training needs. Kirst (1990) noted that the outcomes based evaluative framework is particularly apt for technical and vocational training institutions like community colleges. Unlike other education institutions at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, graduate employment and/or self employment is the primary mission of community colleges. How well any community college fulfills its mandate can be measured easily through tracking graduate employment and self-employment rates. Therefore, as discussed by Dolence et al.(1997), community colleges clearly meet the requirements of outcomes based evaluation because they have outcomes that are directly relevant to their mandate and easily measured.

Given an effective decentralized governance and outcome based reporting process, policy should avoid prescribing specific methods to ensure program relevance.

For example, broad national training standards are appropriate for ensuring labour mobility throughout the country. However, more specific training standards may be applicable in one province but largely irrelevant to the labour market in another. Likewise curricula development or instructional processes that have success in one context may not be transferable to another institution. Local institutions should be provided with the latitude necessary to design processes that meet their own circumstances. Accountability within the decentralized context remains based upon the evaluation on outcomes. However, as Mitchell and Sackney (2000) noted, management decentralization means a much greater requirement for professional development if there is to be an improvement in outcomes. Managers and teachers will no longer have methods prescribed from the central bureaucracy. Now they will have to set up their own processes and be accountable for the success. Without the resources necessary to improve the education and training of managers and teachers, the decentralization policy will fail due to a lack of local capacity.

Policy Context

The 11th draft education law (National Assembly, 2004) - Article 86 Content of state management of education vaguely noted that (if passed) the government would be required collect data “relating to organization and activities of education”. However, given their specific and measurable outcomes, legislation and policy related to community colleges could and should be much more specific. Community colleges should be required to submit data on a number of key criteria. These criteria should include (but not be limited to) data related to: (a) applications, (b) attrition (i.e., drop

outs), and (c) employment / self employment six months after graduation. Furthermore, these criteria should be segregated by special targeted populations such as women, ethnic minorities and special needs. The data reported should be independently verified to ensure accuracy and reliability.

The purpose of the outcomes-based reporting and evaluation process should not be punitive. Employment and self employment figures are dependent not just upon training program quality but many factors such as the overall economic state. However, the outcomes based reporting system should serve to encourage schools to forge stronger linkages with employers. Furthermore, the outcomes based reporting should help managers to resources in a manner that best achieves (within the local context) the desired results. Segregating the data will help mitigate the marginalization of targeted groups that are less able to achieve the desired results. The data reported should result in a longitudinal assessment of the institution's progress in achieving its mandate.

Significant reference to the ongoing professional development of community college managers and teachers is omitted in the current policy framework. The government will need to allocate more resources for the professional development of local manager and instructors for two broad purposes. First, the capacity to track and report on the outcomes criteria needs to be developed. Data that is collected and reported needs to be accurate or there is no purpose in implementing this process. Currently local officials have next to no capacity in this regard. Second, instructors are generally lacking in the practical and technical skill requirements of the labour market. Typically teachers have academic backgrounds and are unfamiliar with the requirements in a typical

workplace of the college graduates. Extensive technical training will be required in order for the community college programs to improve their employment and self employment outcomes.

Recommendation #3

That MOET establish an outcome based reporting protocol in which all community colleges annually collect, validate and submit data against criteria selected in order to meaningfully measure institutional relevance to local and regional communities.

Recommendation for Further Study

Further study of the policy implications of community colleges in Vietnam is necessary. Case studies of all newly established community colleges should be conducted and recommendations developed based upon demonstrated best practices. Community colleges were first established in 1994 with the support of foreign governments in order to experiment with education and training models adapted to the Vietnamese context. MOET needs to conduct a thorough evaluation of the various community college models and to replicate the effective and innovative practices nationwide. Future studies should be conducted by Vietnamese researchers familiar with the Vietnamese context, but also with the global trends in technical, vocational and university level education and training. The results of these further studies should facilitate a further revision of the laws and policies currently governing community colleges in Vietnam.

Recommendation #4

That MOET complete an evaluation all community colleges in Vietnam in order to record best practices and lessons learned. This evaluation would inform future policy development processes and help build a regulatory environment that encouraged community colleges to identify and respond to the evolving practical skills training needs in their respective communities. Of particular importance is further case studies of innovative institutional practices that demonstrate potential for achieving the objectives of current and proposed legislation and policy in Vietnam.

Recommendations Summary

The concepts of lifelong learning, community-based institutional governance and program relevance to the labour market are critical elements to any national skills training system. These concepts pose a particular challenge in Vietnam. The doi moi economic renovation process has transformed the labour market – requiring a proportionate change within the public education and training system. Vietnamese institutions face a further challenge by trying to integrate non-governmental governance perspectives while being sure not to threaten the political monopoly of the Communist Party. Many schools in Vietnam, at all levels of the education and training system, have adopted effective models related to lifelong learning, governance and program relevance. Most importantly, the models have proven effective within the current political and economic context. Based upon this success, Vietnamese educators and policy makers need to encourage more dialogue so that the lessons learned can be replicated throughout the system. Likewise, new innovative practices need to be encouraged. At the legislative

and policy levels, Vietnam has already adopted many of the exemplary models related to effective skills training policy. However (like many previous attempts at reform in education and training) if innovation is not more openly encouraged and researched, the policy and legislative reform process will remain unimplemented. New research needs to ensure that educators and administrators have both the capacity and the willingness to attempt proven institutional practices in lifelong learning, community governance, and labour market relevance.

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